

# Front Mission 4

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# FRONT MISSION 4

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# C O N T E N T S

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# C H A R A C T E R S

Dida **Earth Bosch**

He is skilled at strategic planning ; a former German officer. He was a classmate of Captain Blauer Nebel Wagner at the military academy. He is not very proactive and as a reserved personality. age.

D U

Dieter Bosch

Beck Canova

Beck **Canova**

An Italian soccer player with no military experience. He has a free and cheerful personality and dislikes following rules.

## O T H E R S

Frederick **Lancaster**

A freelance journalist, he is investigating the case of the attack on the Japanese military base. He is a famous journalist who broke the story of the »Sakata Industries Incident« as a result of his reporting during the Manchuria conflict. Turtles

Rolf Wagner

Rolf **Wagner**

of the German special forces, Blauer Nebel. 28 years old. Calm and collected, suitable for a commander.

Niklas Gleaser

Niklas **Glaser**, commander of the German special forces Blauer Nebel, is a highly skilled soldier with a strict personality.

Fredrick Lancaster



# RS

## DURANDAL

Elsa Eliane

Elsa **Eliane**

The protagonist of this story. A 22-year-old female newcomer to the Durangle Corps. Previously a Wanzer pilot in the EC **Lalance military**. She has no combat experience yet.

Zead Elger

Gideon **Elger**

A former British military officer with ample experience, he is the commander of Durandal's combat unit. 45 years old. He is a polite and reliable father figure.

Hames Sturges

Durandal information analyst. He is the team's leader and **excels** in information processing using computers. 20 years old. Optimistic personality.

Latona Rodiona  
Vasilev

Latona **Rodiona Vasilev** is a Wanzer pilot from the Zakhtra military. She has a long history of military experience and is strict with herself and others. **She is** 20 years old.

Hermes Sturges

**PROLOGUE : German Army Base in Saxony - Anhalt**

Late at night, 2:47am.

The disaster began suddenly, without any warning.

"Assistant Commander, there's an abnormality in the radar. We're unable to detect it."

The brains of the base, the central control room.

The base commander on night duty frowned slightly and groaned in response to the radar operator's report.

"Is it broken?"

"It may be, but both the main and sub are out of service at the same time. It might be a magnetic storm.»"A magnetic storm? Is it enough to cause problems with the radar?»What does that mean? The assistant commander frowned seriously.

"If something like that were to happen, there would have been some warning beforehand.

"Well, that's fine. I'll contact the Air Force and send out an airborne patrol plane. We'll use it as a substitute until the base's radar is up and running again."

"roger that"



## Prologue

's back as he began to communicate, the assistant commander wondered with a sour look on his face whether a malfunction or a geomagnetic storm would be more troublesome. If it was a malfunction, naturally there would be a budget to repair it, and if the repairs took a long time, they would also need to cover the cost of sending out an airborne patrol aircraft for the time being. A geomagnetic storm would likely be a temporary phenomenon, so the cost would only be the same as sending out an airborne patrol aircraft once, but the problem would be what would happen if the geomagnetic storm was so severe that even planes couldn't be sent out. If that were to happen, the base would effectively be rendered inoperable until the geomagnetic storm subsided.

However, the reality was far more troublesome than he had expected. "Assistant Commander! We can't contact the air base! Neither the radio nor the landline are working!»Hearing the operator's panicked voice, the assistant commander instinctively stood up from his seat.

"What did you say?"

"It's not just the airbase, we can't contact anywhere! We have internal lines but we've been completely cut off from outside communication!"

"That's stupid! Who on earth would dare do something so bold as cut off communications at a military base...?»the assistant commander shouted, but his voice was drowned out by a roar accompanied by a tremendous vibration.

"Wh-what?"

"Someone is attacking this base! Numerous missiles, no, rockets, ahhh!»Vibrations and roars shook the entire central control room violently. At the same time, the normal lights went out, and

Switches to constant light.

"A Level 1 emergency alert has been issued! Capture the enemy and mobilize all the forces of the base to counterattack!»The assistant commander shouted at the top of his lungs in the unreliable light of the emergency lights.

"Helicopter units, tank units, van tour units, all operational aircraft, launch immediately! Call up all personnel on standby and activate all reserve aircraft!"

"roger that!"

The operators, with expressions of panic on their faces, sent out instructions to the combat units one after another. The fact that the internal line was still alive was a blessing in disguise, the assistant commander thought, shining a little.

However, the reports coming in from various parts of the base were so horrific that they instantly blew away any such optimistic impressions.

first helicopter unit! The enemy is a large number of van tours! With overwhelming firepower, the helicopters are being shot down one by one as soon as they take off!

in the unit that departed are inoperable ! The following unit can't leave the hangar !»

"An enemy missile has been fired into the second Wanzer Hangar! It has received a direct hit and all the Wanzers and personnel inside have been wiped out!"

Wanzer unit that had been dispatched entered a firefight with the enemy Wanzers at the base, but...





"We're suffering heavy damage from guided missiles! We can't protect ourselves!"

"The standby personnel barracks were attacked by enemy vanguards! It was burned to the ground with napalm bombs, and there appear to be no survivors!"

"Large fires have broken out in various base facilities in enemy-controlled areas! They're burning down! There's nothing we can do about it!"

The last communication was that an enemy Wanzer was about to force its way into the tank unit hangar, and then it was lost!"

"Communication has been lost at the heliport as well! It appears that the VanTours that entered the area have been firing indiscriminately at both combatants and maintenance personnel alike !"

"Report from the Wanzer forces! The pilots who escaped from our destroyed Wanzers have been attacked by enemy Wanzers, along with their escape devices, and have been completely annihilated! The enemy is planning to kill us all!"

"What the hell? ....."

The unfortunate Lieutenant Commander groaned as he felt the color quickly drain from his face.

Who, why, what, and for what purpose?

Questions swirl around in my head, but of course I can't find any answers.

There is only one answer that is presented before us. The German army, no, the E.C.

## Prologue

This base, which should have been a source of pride, had been destroyed in an instant, and all the base staff, including myself, were being slaughtered mercilessly. That was the reality.

"It's like... the devil. A demonic attack."

As the assistant commander groaned in his sleep, one of the operators shouted in a desperate voice, »Assistant commander! The central control room is now in danger too! Let's escape!« "Escape? Where and how are we going to escape from this demonic enemy?" the assistant commander asked in an exasperated tone, just as the wall of the central control room broke, and super-high temperature flames and hot air that would bring certain death stormed into the room.

# MISSION 1

Elsa Joins  
the Army





the organization's name had been something like Excalibur, rather than Durandal, named after the sword of the French warrior Roland, I might not have transferred. Before my superior officer in the French army recommended that I transfer, that was how weak my impression of the E.C. Land Tactics Research Institute Durandal was.

"Durandal is a specialized research institute for Van Tour tactics, founded by E.C. If you go here, you can learn the latest Van Tour tactics."

de facto Aussie who controlled the French Venturers unit, called me, a mere NCO, in person, despite being a full-fledged general, and earnestly encouraged me to transfer.»Unfortunately, our French army is lagging behind other countries' armies in every aspect, especially when it comes to Wanzers. It is also very deplorable that the Venturers deployed to our units are old and there are only a few of them, but that is something that can be made up for if we can just pour in the budget once an emergency occurs.

However, the more serious problem is that there are almost no officers, including myself, who can operate the Wanzer tactically. After all, the French army's Wanzer units have been in operation since their creation.

## Mission 1 Elsa Joins the Army

I, Sergeant Elsa Eliane, should ask my superior officer, but in the end I didn't say anything. In the military, there are overwhelmingly many cases where it is better not to say anything if you are unsure whether to say it or not. Especially when the other person is of a higher rank than you, silence is usually the best answer.

Then my superior officer looked at me again and said:

"Sergeant Eliane, in my opinion, you are one of the most excellent Wanzer pilots in the French military. Furthermore, you have a flexible way of thinking, and you don't just complete the tasks given to you; you have the ability to be creative and innovative. You are someone who should have gone on to military academy to hone your skills as a commander.

In fact, your immediate superior has recommended you as the top candidate for commission as an officer. However, even if you go to the French military academy now, there is absolutely nothing you can learn to become a Wanzer unit commander ! In fact, it will only make you more distant from Wanzers."

"...I was not aware of that."

I had no desire to become an officer, but wherever I went, I didn't want to be far removed from van tours, I thought vaguely.

Although the Eliane family has always been a military family, or rather a family that has produced many soldiers, almost none of them have become officers. My great-grandfather, grandfather, and father all served as non-commissioned officers for many years before being discharged, and some of my older brothers, who are still in the French army, have stubbornly refused to go to military academy despite being encouraged by their superiors many times. In short, the Eliane family is a family of stubborn, conservative country folk who hate thinking about difficult things and prefer to get their bodies moving in the field. Normally, with that temperament, one would become a farmer or a craftsman, but for some reason, the men in the Eliane family have naturally chosen to serve in the military for generations. It may be true that they are very patriotic, but I feel that they have a stronger sense of it being a familiar job.

My great-grandfather, who passed away five years ago, lived to be over 100 years old, but he was a dedicated soldier who served in the French army for over 50 years, including his time as a reservist and military personnel.



## Mission 1 Elsa Joins the Army

He told me and my brothers many stories and legends that would have been unthinkable for Napoleon. According to the story, the Eliane family has served in the French military ever since his ancestors, about 300 years ago, who traveled with the emperor to Egypt, Spain, and Russia, and returned alive despite suffering many hardships. My great-grandfather's grandfather died in battle at Verdun, my uncle was shot while fighting in the resistance against Nazi Germany, and my brother never returned from the Indochina Peninsula. Regardless of the old legends, my great-grandfather's own experiences were quite tragic, but we listened attentively. Also, although it seems that I was the first woman to be assigned to a combat unit, there were many stories of women in my family serving as military nurses, radio operators, interpreters, etc. I heard that my great-grandfather's daughter, one of my great-aunts, was a military officer, but she was the first intellectual in the Eliane family to be appointed to an officer-equivalent position. So, one of the reasons I joined the French military was the family tradition, but another reason was Ventour.

the Wanzer first came into the limelight as a main land warfare weapon. It seems that it had been in existence for a long time before that as a special-purpose machine for clearing mines, and had been effective in battles in terrain that tanks could not enter, but it was too expensive and was not seen as a weapon capable of replacing the tank. At least, no one thought that the French army would have an independently organized Wanzer unit. However, in the conflict between the U.S.S.N. and the O.C.U. over Huffman Island, which rose up in the Pacific Ocean, Wanzers

The Wanzer was adopted as the main land warfare weapon and played a decisive role in the war, so even in the E.C. countries that were not directly involved, the perception of the Wanzer changed significantly. In Germany and the UK, the reorganization of the army with Wanzer units as the main force progressed rapidly, and although France was far behind, it still managed to organize an independent Wanzer unit. And then, videos and information about the Wanzer began to circulate with such force and scale that even I, who was just a child at the time, could see them. I still remember well that in my elementary school class, there was a boy who was a Wanzer maniac. Boys are usually interested in the latest weapons, but his devotion to Wanzers was extraordinary. Looking back, he was small, severely nearsighted, and had a frail constitution and was prone to illness, so he may have admired the powerful human-shaped Wanzer as the ideal body. On the other hand, I was a typical tomboy at the time, influenced by my older brothers, who didn't care about how I dressed and would run around the fields and mountains covered in mud with the boys. Although she was strong-willed, she wasn't particularly big or strong, so she was usually left behind when the boys got serious about doing something.

And while I was feeling frustrated and depressed about being left behind by the boys I was playing with, a Wanzer fanatic who also treated me like a nuisance called out to me, »Don't worry about it, Elsa. No matter how strong you are, or how fast you are, it doesn't matter once you're in a Wanzer. The future is Wanzers.«

## Mission 1 Elsa Joins the Army

"I see."

I didn't take his word for it, but it got me interested in Van Tours.

**New Continent Oceana.** It's true that among the U.S.N. and O.C.U. Wanzer pilots who had distinguished themselves in the Huffman Conflict, there were a considerable number of female, though not as many as the male. Among them were some slender and beautiful women who could rival models, and at that moment I made a firm decision.

«I want to become a Wanzer pilot too!"

Looking back, it was truly a ridiculous motive, but for better or worse, my young determination didn't encounter any particular obstacles and progressed straight ahead. Compared to other weapons, **Wanzers** are equipped with complete escape devices that allow the pilot to escape in an emergency, and not only is the death rate in actual combat low, but fatal accidents during training are also extremely rare. My father and older brothers knew this, so when they heard that I wanted to become a Wanzer pilot, they all smiled with relief and nodded, telling me to do my best.

And, I think it's fair to say that I was fortunate, but I suited the Wanzer well. There were many people who wanted to become a Wanzer pilot, a flashy, state-of-the-art weapon that was also highly safe, but a surprising number of them couldn't stand the claustrophobic feeling of **the Wanzer** cockpit and dropped out. There's even a true story of an officer who was renowned as a tank commander who, when he got into a **Wanzer**, couldn't stand it for even a minute and screamed and jumped out of the cockpit.

At first, I was surprised at how small the cockpit was, but I quickly got used to it, and now it actually feels quite comfortable. If anything, it may be that the cockpit is so small that your sense of physical body disappears, giving you the illusion that the Wanzer is your own body. This is just my own speculation, but I feel that people who are too confident in their own physical bodies and cannot bear the loss of physical senses may not be suited to being Wanzer pilots.

Anyway, in the six years since I volunteered for the military at age 16, I had honed my skills as a Wanzer pilot, and was recognized as someone who could literally control the Wanzer as if it were my own body. I was also promoted to the rank of Sergeant, the highest rank for a non-commissioned officer. In my own opinion, those were very fulfilling days. However, that doesn't mean I didn't have any complaints.

Despite being assigned to a combat unit for six years, I have never experienced actual combat. However, I am not the only one who has no combat experience ; all of the French Wanzer units are the same. And unless something were to suddenly launch an invasion of mainland France, this situation would not change. Five years ago, shortly after I was assigned to the Ventures, U.S.N. and O.C.U., who were fighting on Huffman Island, clashed, and a war called the Second Huffman Conflict broke out. PMO. However, the Zaftra -led Peacekeeping Organization mediated a ceasefire agreement and dispatched a peacekeeping force to Huffman Island. The core of the force was the Zaftra military, but the E.C. countries, which also supported the ceasefire,



## Mission 1 Elsa Joins the Army

sent out small numbers of state-of-the-art Wanzer units for practical testing.

However, France only sent a transport aircraft unit, a token tank unit, and a helicopter unit, and refrained from sending a Venturer unit. Officially, the French government's official statement was that what the Peacekeeping Forces needed was an aircraft unit that could reliably transport supplies, rather than fighting forces such as Wanzers, but behind the scenes, rumors were circulating that Zaftra had refused because the old-fashioned Wanzers belonging to the French military were not a fighting force, or that they were afraid that there would be casualties in the event that someone was killed in battle, since many of the children of high-ranking government officials and politicians had become Wanzer pilots. I don't know what the truth was, and I don't want to know. However, this incident made everyone realize, without any logic, that unless something extraordinary happened, the French military had no intention of sending a Vanturer unit into actual combat. Some of the Wanzer pilots who were my seniors asked to be transferred, saying that there was no point in being in a unit that couldn't fight, and there must have been some who were greatly relieved, even if they didn't say it aloud.

for my own feelings, I had only just been assigned to the Ventures, so to be honest, I didn't know much about it. Of course, I joined the military with the intention of fighting, so I thought it was a shame that I missed the opportunity to go to war, but I was worried that I would risk my life to mediate the war between U.S.N. and O.C.U., not to protect my homeland France or E.C., no matter how much it was for the sake of international peace.

To be honest, it was questionable whether it was even worth it. Furthermore, later on, the shocking truth was revealed that the Second Huffman Conflict was in fact an experimental war to put high - performance Wanzers using human brains to practical use, engineered by the military, politicians, and military companies of the parties to the war, U.S.S.N. and O.C.U., as well as ZAFTRA.

I was glad that myself and my comrades in the French Ventures unit were not needlessly involved in a war that started with a conspiracy that had no just cause and ended up losing our lives in vain. However, I also felt disheartened that this would mean that the French army would no longer be able to send Ventures into combat. In fact, after that, E.C. left the Peacekeeping Organization, and not only France, but also Germany and Great Britain showed no signs of sending troops outside of E.C. territory. In short, the E.C. nations began to move in the direction of enjoying peace within their own shells, and the role of military personnel, not just Wanzer pilots, was greatly reduced.

It's not that I was indifferent to these situations, but there was nothing a mere NCO could do about the international situation. I had come to the conclusion that it was the job of politicians to think about what to do with the country, and within that, it was the job of officers, especially senior officers of the rank of colonel or general, to think about what to do with the military.

But to think that a senior officer of the general rank would seriously consider what the future holds for the French army, and then come up with the idea of sending me to an outside agency, was beyond my imagination.

## Mission 1 Elsa Joins the Army

"Well then, Sergeant Eliane. Why don't you go to Durandal and learn the latest Ventour tactics thoroughly? I believe that this will be the most effective way for you to contribute to your country, France."

"Understood, Your Excellency."

In front of my superior officer who was speaking with such enthusiasm, I replied in a half-appeasing manner, »It will be difficult for me to leave the French army, but if you tell me that it will be a way to contribute to my country, then I will abide by your orders."

"Um, thank you very much."

Saying that, the superior officer nodded vigorously.

So I left the French military and joined Durandal, the E.C. land tactics research institute, but at first I didn't even know exactly where Durandal's facility was located. Since E.C.'s conference center is in Paris and the organization takes its name from the sword of Roland, I assumed it must be in France, but to my surprise, it was actually located in England.

showed me an official document from the E.C. Congress, which said:

- The E.C. Land Tactical Research Institute Durandal is divided into three departments: Development, Medical Research, and Tactical Research.

As a result, I ended up being assigned to the Tactical Research Department. The three departments combined had a total of about 300 researchers, making it a fairly large research institute, but what surprised me most was the description that the Tactical Research Department had about 40 dedicated Wanzer pilots, about 20 Wanzers kept in full operation, and about 60 Wanzer parts kept for research, development, and replacement.

can operate about twenty Wanzers at any one time, and about forty in an emergency, making it roughly the same fighting power as the Wanzer forces of France, Italy, Spain, and others. Of course, the fighting power of a single Wanzer varies greatly between old and new models, but even if they are all old models like the French army, forty Wanzers is still an incredible force. It is by no means the scale you would imagine from the word research institute. But, on the other hand, I decided that it was precisely because they had secured such a large number of Wanzers and pilots that a mere institute was able to independently research and develop new tactics for efficiently operating Wanzers. «Durandal has its own aircraft other than the Wanzers, so you can just wait at the airbase in France. I'll have them come and pick you up.» Following my superior's instructions in a good mood, I headed to the airbase with a backpack full of my few personal belongings. After a while, I thought the aircraft was probably a large transport plane, but it looked unfamiliar.

## Mission 1 Elsa Joins the Army

An unidentifiable aircraft glided into the designated runway.

"Is that the Durandal aircraft that came to pick me up?"

jet transporter, so I was stunned to see such a large plane. However, the emblem on the wing of the transport plane definitely had the word»Durandal»on it.

Then the tail of the stopped transport plane opened up and a well-built man climbed out. He seemed to be in his mid-forties. He had the air of someone who had served as a professional soldier for many years, and exuded an air of dignity similar to that of my grandfather and father. He then walked up to me and said in a rich, resonant voice,»It's nice to meet you. I'm Zead Elger, leader of the tactical research department at Durandal, the E.C. Land -Based New Tactical Research Institute. Generally, you can call me Zead."

"It's nice to meet you. My name is Elsa Eliane, a former French Army Sergeant and Wanzer pilot. I look forward to working with you."

When I responded, Zead gave a small smile.

"Nice to meet you. May I call you Elsa?"

"yes"

When I nodded, Zead walked slowly towards the transport plane. I walk towards the

As I followed him, he spoke softly.

"Yes, there's no need to be so stiff. Durandal is not a military force. There are only two positions: leader and member I. Even if you go against me, the leader, you wo n't be charged with disobeying a superior officer."

"I don't mean to be so stiff,»I thought to myself, but I didn't say anything and just went ahead. Then, when I entered the transport plane, a young black man with glasses who was waiting for me there suddenly called out to me in a cheerful voice.

"Hello! You're the new recruit from the French army. I'm Hermes, and I'm in charge of analysis, but I do pretty much anything to do with computers and mechanics, and when we're short on hands, I also pilot planes, vehicles, and van tours. Nice to meet you!»"I'm Elsa Eliane. Nice to meet you."

He spoke to me in a friendly, almost familiar tone, and although I was confused, I responded politely. Indeed, if this kind of attitude was the norm in this organization, then my reaction as a newly transferred NCO must have seemed very stiff.

Then the young man who called himself Hermes smiled cheerfully, showing his white teeth.

"Don't be so formal. Durandal isn't a military force. Right, Jido?



## Mission 1 Elsa Joins the Army

"Yeah."

Zead, who seemed even more like a soldier than I was, gave a wry smile at Hermes's flippant remark.»Well, we can discuss the details while we're on the move, but let's get going. If we leave now, we can get back to HQ before noon."

"That's right. I'll go get permission to take off."

With that, Hermes walked off with a brisk step. He had said that he would act as pilot when there were not enough people on the team, and it seemed that he had been the one to pilot this transport plane.

Then Jaid looked at me and asked with a grin.

"Are you surprised?"

"Yeah, well, a little."

When I gave an ambiguous response, Jid turned serious and continued.

「Even though she may look like that, Hermes is an extremely talented person. It might not be an exaggeration to say that she is a genius.

For now, the only reason Durandal can call itself a research institute is because he is a member of it."

"A genius, you say?"

Stunned, I looked back at Zead. His expression told me he was joking.

Apparently that's not the case.

Then Jido continues in an even more serious tone.

«Durandal has members with military backgrounds, like you and me, but there are also those, like Hermes, who have no connection to the military at all. And members with civilian backgrounds don't follow strict discipline like the military.

For this reason, Durandal is looked down upon by some in the E.C. military as a ragtag bunch with no discipline whatsoever. However, I believe that unless civilians and soldiers exchange ideas with flexible thinking that transcends their respective boundaries, new Venturer tactics cannot be created.

In fact, all of the Ventours used for tactical development at Durandal are tuned by Hermes, and thanks to ideas that a soldier like me would never think of, they are able to demonstrate extremely high performance."

« .... Really"

That means, like a racing machine or a custom car, they specially tune the Wanzer to make it perform at high performance, I thought, tilting my head in confusion. It was certainly an amazing skill, but it seemed a bit off-topic from researching Wanzer tactics. Just then, Hermes' voice began to ring out from the speaker on the plane.

"The control tower has given us permission to take off. We'll be taking off shortly, so please take your seats and fasten your belts."

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Before I could finish speaking, the plane started to move, and Jid and I hurriedly took our seats.

"It seems like there's something you want to ask."

Seeing my face as I fastened my belt, Jido said.

"If you have any questions, feel free to ask me. If I can explain anything, I'll answer it."

«Well then, I'll go ahead and ask.

I just said that the reason Durandal can call itself a research institute is because Hermes is employed there, but then what do the other researchers do? Are they his assistants?」

I wondered if it was a bit of a mean question, but I asked, partly to gauge my new boss's thoughts. It wasn't a problem that Zead thought highly of Hermes, but if he was truly a genius Wanzer researcher, then surely he shouldn't have had such a valuable resource do menial tasks like piloting the plane that came to pick up the new recruits?

However, I was honestly taken aback by Zead's response.

"There are currently no other researchers. There are engineers and operators seconded from defense companies, but Hermes is the only one doing work that can be called a researcher."

"Only one researcher?"

Wait a second, where on earth did all those 300 research staff go?

He looks at Zead in shock.

Then Zead gave a small wry smile.

"Oh, it seems you have seen the official document from the E.C. Congress. That is, how should I put it, at the moment, still just a pipe dream. As it says in that document, we need to create a proper research institute as soon as possible, but the current situation is that we don't have enough personnel, more than anything.

I lead, is planning to eventually gather forty Wanzer pilots, but you will be the eighth. The Development Department and Medical Research Department are still in the process of preparing their organizations, and leaders have yet to be decided."

"..."

Doesn't that mean that the organization called Durandal still has almost no substance? I groaned in shock, though I didn't say it out loud.

Perhaps sensing what I was thinking, Zead continued his explanation in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Originally, the movement to establish an institute to research Venture tactics, separate from the military of each country, was driven more by defense companies than by the military or governments of each country.

He thought that if he cooperated in coming up with new tactics and developed a new type of Van Tour based on that concept, he could efficiently capture the entire E.C. military as a guaranteed customer.

On the other hand, the E.C. armies of each country were worried that if they were to study van tour tactics, they would have to do so within their own country, and that their secrets would not be leaked.

## Mission 1 Elsa Joins the Army

research institutes with other countries is prevalent, especially in Germany and the UK.

But when they were dispatched to Huffman Island, those who witnessed the latest Wanzers being used by the U.S.N., U.C.U. and Zafra military realized that the E.C. military's Wanzer tactics were far behind, and began to insist that they needed to work together to study tactics, which is when the winds began to change. As a result, military companies took the lead in lobbying the E.C. governments, and the military finally got up the nerve to start, and about 80% of the preparations for the establishment of a joint research institute were completed. The Durandal concept you saw in the official E.C. Parliament document was drawn up around that time.

But then, a bolt from the blue came and completely turned the tables."

"A bolt from the blue?"

When I asked Zead what on earth had happened, he replied with a wry smile, »Yes, it was the Sakata Industries scandal. The official name given by the E.C. Congress is the Second Huffman Dispute Conspiracy, so maybe that's what we should call it.

## New Continent Oceana

It is said that the government and military of U.S.N, O.C.- U.'Zafra were involved in that incident, but the main conspiracy was led by O.C.U.'s military contractor, Sakata Industry. Sakata Industry's European subsidiary was one of the companies that strongly lobbied the European governments to establish the VanTour Tactical Joint Research Institute.

"■ •::Is that so?"

Half stunned, I was dazzled.

a military company had used a human brain to develop a high-performance Wanzer, I thought it was a horrible thing to do, but I never dreamed that the same company was also lobbying E.C. to set up an institute to jointly research new Wanzer tactics. Perhaps the company was just hoping that if more advanced tactics were researched and used in actual combat, their company's high-performance Wanzers would sell more. Even so, it left me with mixed feelings.

And Zead continues speaking.

"The exposure of the Sakata Industries conspiracy caused tremors literally everywhere among the munitions companies that had been trying to strengthen their ties with the government. E.C. governments also became wary of munitions companies and began to distance themselves from them.

Tactical Joint Research Institute, which was being prepared for establishment by the defense industry, was also affected and was on the verge of being scrapped."

"What? It just disappeared?"

I was once again shocked and astonished to see Durandal in such a precarious situation.

"But in the end, it was established, right?"



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"Yes, at the beginning of this year, we were finally officially recognized as the E.C. Land Tactics Research Institute. Until now, we hadn't been able to gather enough personnel, but we've now somehow managed to appeal to the military forces of each country in E.C. and get them to recommend promising personnel. You are one of those people, recommended by the French army,»Zead said with a grin.

Originally, France was the country that was most keen to establish a joint research institute. Of all the military forces, France was keenly aware that its own Ventour tactics were behind the times. However, at that time France happened to be experiencing a change of government, and a major military contractor had close ties with Sakata Industries, so the government strongly opposed the plan, and we were forced to pull out.

If no one had taken over, it would have been a situation that would have really fizzled out, but fortunately, at the last minute, the UK offered to take over. After that, there were many twists and turns, such as issues with authority, the chain of command, and confidentiality, but somehow we managed to get the project established."

"I see, so that's how it happened."

So that's why, even though the organization's name is Durandal, its facilities are located in England, I realized.

And Zead continues speaking calmly again.

has no intention of providing any further support or investment beyond providing a place of residence. Originally, military companies were supposed to sponsor the project, and provide funding and personnel, but under the current circumstances, it is unlikely that they will be able to provide much. In the end, they have no choice but to do everything on their own.

In this situation, we are researching new Van Tour tactics and trying to show results. It was a stroke of luck that someone as talented as Hermes joined us, but with the current limited manpower situation, we need him to take on a variety of on-site duties, otherwise we won't be able to meet his needs.

In that sense, I said earlier that there are no other researchers besides Hermes, but in reality, that's not good enough. I think that all members of Durandal, including you and I, need to serve as Wanzer researchers as well, rather than simply being Wanzer pilots. That will be necessary until we have enough members.

"That's, that's difficult."

I sighed softly. I had been assigned to Durandal with the intention of learning new Wanzer tactics, but it seemed I would have to research Wanzers and come up with tactics on my own. No matter how I thought about it, it was too much for someone like me who had only received the average NCO training, and I was so surprised that the nuclear halo

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It's a job that's likely to happen.

Then, perhaps sensing my distress, Zead smiled again and said, »Well, I'm not asking you to suddenly achieve success as a Wanzer researcher. Currently, Durandal is conducting Wanzer- related research and evaluation work at the request of various companies and government organizations. Through that work, you will be able to learn efficient methods for operating Wanzers, and then you can apply that knowledge to tactical research."

"...Yes, I'll try my best."

But even if he said that, I still had no idea what to do, I thought to myself, and sighed again. I was in a really pathetic situation. But then, all of a sudden, Zead spoke in an impressed tone.

"Elsa, you're serious."

"Eh? I-Is that so?"

I asked, sounding a little confused, and Zead nodded slightly.

"Until I told you, you hadn't heard anything about the actual situation at Durandal, had you? If you were suddenly told something like this, most people would regret being assigned to such an incredible organization. It's not surprising that they would get angry and say that this isn't what we said, that they should go home.»

But, while it may be okay to do so before you arrive, saying something like that after you arrive is probably not something that's tolerated in the military, or so I thought, but then I realized. Durandal, at least in principle, is not a military organization.

And while I was at a loss for words, Zead continued in a calm tone. "However, you are primarily concerned about whether you will be able to carry out your duties properly in the special environment of Durandal. It may be true that this is typical of a soldier, but as his superior, I find your serious and responsible attitude very pleasing."

« .... is that so"

I felt that I was in a pathetic state, anxious and worried about my future, but my new boss seemed to see me as being serious. I was a little worried about whether Jied had a correct understanding of my situation, but from what I had felt so far, he seemed to have deep, accurate, and in a way, harsh and realistic insight. If he said it was okay, then it was probably okay.

I'm not sure if he could see through my speculation, but Zead continued speaking calmly.

"For the time being, you will be my assistant and will learn the duties of Durandal. It will be a kind of apprenticeship period. During this process, there will be various things you will have to learn,

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as long as you have the skills to operate a Vantour properly, there will be no problem. However, Durandal's Vantour has some special adjustments. As soon as you arrive at HQ, I would like you to actually ride it and get a feel for it."

"yes"

Finally, the conversation returned to the van tour, and I nodded with a sense of relief. Then, Zead looked at the monitor on the plane and said,

"We're almost there. Let's have lunch at HQ.»"So, Arrow 6, how's the Durandal special van tour going?»Hermes' cheerful voice rang through the headset. I replied as I drove the van tour I had just climbed into to the designated location.

"It's much more responsive than the planes I've flown up until now. That's good, but the control method is slightly different, so it's a bit confusing."

"The reaction speed has been increased to nearly the limit of Zenith's. As for the controls, well, once you get used to it, this one should definitely be easier to use."

Well, this control method was designed by Hermes, so it's only natural that it should be easy for the person who designed it to use, I thought, but I didn't say anything and just concentrated on piloting the VanTour.

do. The Durandal HQ facility was located in the countryside of Britain, occupying a fairly large area. On the plane, Zead had told me some gloomy stories about how it was on the verge of being cancelled and had barely been established, so I had prepared myself for the worst, expecting to be crammed into a makeshift prefabricated building that was only supposed to be a HQ in name only, but from a cursory glance, it looked like a properly-equipped Wanzer base facility, and to be honest, I was relieved.

What was even more surprising was that the lunch served in the headquarters cafeteria was not exquisite, but was quite palatable. After all, when he had told his father back home that he was transferring to Durandal, he had received a reply saying that it was his own decision and he wouldn't say anything negative about it, but the food in England tastes terrible, so he had never imagined that he would be able to have a decent meal in the cafeteria of a country like England, especially one run by an organization similar to the military.

Then, as soon as lunch was over, Hermes leaned forward over the table and said, »Well then, let's get Elsa trying out the special Durandal Ventour that I adjusted for her. The one used by the French army was a Zenith, right?"

"Yeah"

When I nodded, Hermes smiled, showing her white teeth.

"Okay, OK! Zenith has a perfectly tuned aircraft in the hangar. Use that one.



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Here!"

"When you board the Van Tour, your call sign is Arrow.»It will be 6. I'm Father 1, and Hermes is Father 12. We'll be giving you instructions from the central control room,»Zead said in a calm tone.

"Today we'll be testing out the basic movements and firing practice rounds. If there are no problems, we'll move on to parachute tests and mock battles, but that will be after tomorrow."

"yes"

Although I have never experienced actual combat, the Venture piloting training, which is designed to simulate combat, is exactly what I want.

It was a daily routine. The model was a Zenith that he was used to riding, and even if it was a special edition Durandal, there shouldn't be any difference that would cause him trouble in operating it.

Hanger·

when he went to the hangar and tried riding the Durandal Wanzel, it was so unwieldy that he wondered if it was really the same Zenith. Its reactions were so quick that the moment he took his first step, he nearly lost his balance and fell forward.

"...This is quite a wild horse."

I groaned softly and carefully operated the Venturer. Fortunately, when I was promoted to squad leader in the French army, I had the experience of switching from a slow-reacting basic soldier's machine to a faster machine for squad leaders, so I had a knack for filling the gap in my senses.

was like the difference between a docile gelding and an untrained free-range horse when compared to Durandal's VanTour.

"Well, it's true that if you want to come up with and try out new tactics, piloting an average Wanzer might not be the best option.

I feel like if you come up with a tactic that can only be applied to an extremely fast Ventour, it won't be of much use in actual combat.»In other words, if you make the Ventour more powerful and put a good pilot who can use it, you can achieve good results. But that's all, isn't it too obvious that it doesn't amount to tactical research? I thought, following Zead's instructions over the headset and taking the Ventour out of the hangar.

"Okay. Now, pick up some speed and run to the tower in front of you."

"roger that"

I drive the Venture, careful not to lose my balance. Although it is a training dummy weapon, I am holding a heavy machine gun and a shotgun in each hand, so if I make a careless movement, I could easily fall over.

"Aro—6, we've reached our destination."

"Okay. Can you see the black building to your right, at three o'clock?"

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Following Zead's instructions, I activated the Venturer's optical sensor.

"Yes, I confirmed the black building...: Oh?"

At that moment, I thought I saw something move in the shadow of the building indicated, so I squinted my eyes and stared closely at the image on the sensor.

«Father 1, there is something that appears to be a Wanzer in the shadow of the black building. It is being disrupted by the power of the building itself, so it cannot be confirmed by the heat sensor, but from what we can see, it appears that there are two operational units hiding there."

"Very well, I found it."

Zead's satisfied voice came from the headset.

"Now, go round and fire at them. It's up to you to decide where to place your fire."

•»roger that"

Feeling that I was being tested, I quickly pushed the Wanzer forward. Indeed, with such quick reactions, it was possible to move almost exactly as intended. But, conversely, whether or not one could move efficiently depended entirely on the judgement of the pilot.»We don't know what weapons the enemy is using. In that case, it would be best for us to use the buildings as cover, up to the very limit of the effective range of our machine guns.»

If you rush in front of an opponent with a long-range weapon like an armor-piercing cannon or an explosive cannon, it would be suicidal to do so too quickly, but if you hesitate and don't get close, you'll give them time to adjust their distance to whatever they want. Timing is important.

I advanced my Wanzer along the side of the building, and when I decided on a good spot, I jumped diagonally and drew my weapon. The moment I saw that the two Wanzers in the shadow of the building were both equipped with shotguns, I stopped my aircraft's advance and simultaneously fired my machine gun in rapid succession.

Bang bang bang, that particular noise rang out, and the training rounds fired from the machine gun hit the front of the two Venturers. Of course, since they were training rounds, they couldn't damage the armor, but if they had been real bullets, the amount of damage would have been automatically measured.

"Okay, stop shooting."

I stopped firing as Zead said it, and a somewhat irritated, brusque voice came through the headset.

"This is Arrow 2. Requesting permission to engage."

"No. We're not planning on having a mock battle today. You two are Arrows. Avoid the shot of 6 whenever possible."

Zead stated calmly, to which Arrow 2 replied in a challenging tone.

"Well, why did you give us a shotgun? Besides, if we're just going to be a target, why did you give us a shotgun?"

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Zar 2 You have your boastworthy fully automatic unmanned control machine! Anyway, being shot at unilaterally while holding a weapon in my hand is not in keeping with my personality!"

"Come on Arrow 2, don't get too heated."

A different voice, this time with a hint of laughter, cut in. It was probably the pilot of the second Wanzer in front of them.

Then Arrow 2 spoke with a stern smack.

"You shut up and let the rookie shoot you!"

"Hey, Latona, you can't say it like that.»

The other Wanzer pilot replied in a tone that could best be described as flippant, in stark contrast to his partner.

I watched the events unfold in a state of half-amazement, wondering what on earth was going on, but when the Arrow 2 van Tour aimed its shotgun right towards me, I no longer had any time to say anything.

«Arrow 2, don't do anything on your own!"

Finally, Zead let out an angry yell, but Arrow 2 completely ignored him and spoke to us.

"Well then, Arrow 6. Are you up for it?"

Or would you rather avoid being treated so harshly in a mock battle right from the first day?」

"Personally, I'm happy to take it on.

But even if Durandal isn't a military force, is it really okay to ignore Father 1's orders?"

I thought I was scolding him, but it seems he only heard the first half of what I said.

"I'll take it! Highly recommended!"

"Hey, hold on!"

Even if you tell me to wait, I know that there is no way I can wait. 2 charged forward and fired a shotgun, but I jumped back to avoid it and fired my machine gun. The machine gun has a longer effective range than the shotgun, so if I don't let him close the distance, I can attack unilaterally. However, the arrow The Arrow 2 Wanzer also charges in at breakneck speed, intent on closing the gap. And even if the performance and pilot skill are exactly the same, the structure of the Wanzer means that it is faster to move forward than to retreat. The distance closes in an instant, and the Arrow 2's shotgun attacks graze the Wanzer. If it gets hit directly, it won't destroy the unit immediately, but it will still be measured as considerable damage.

But actually, I had been waiting for this moment.



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"Go Ettsu!"

With a flash of determination, I fired both the machine gun and the shotgun at the same time. Using weapons with different effective ranges at the same time is a fairly advanced and difficult category of Wanzer combat technique, but in return, if it was successful, it could deal devastating damage to the opponent in a single hit.

And this hit seemed to have hit well, as Alo 12's Wanzer I lurched forward and stopped dead. Generally, training Wanzers are set up to be forced to shut down if the virtual damage automatically measured when a training bullet hits the unit and exceeds a value equivalent to the destruction of the unit, and it seemed Durandal's Wanzer was no exception.

Then, the other Van Tour, a little late, started firing his shotgun. Perhaps he couldn't just stand by and watch his colleague get killed, but he was too far away and didn't approach aggressively like Arrow 2.»Could this guy be an amateur?"

Tilting my head, I quickly gauged the distance and returned fire with my machine gun. If we kept firing at this great distance, even if the Wanzer was a cutting-edge, high-performance machine and the pilot was an expert marksman, as long as we were using a shotgun, it would be unable to win against the machine gun. After a while of firing, the other Wanzer also seemed to have received damage equivalent to the destruction of its body, so it stopped firing and stood there, arms dangling.

Then, Zead's voice came from the headset.

"You win, Arro - 6. Stop firing."

»yes» ■ ■ Tomo: I followed the instructions and stopped firing, but I still can't let my guard down as to what might happen next. It seems that the Durandal organization is, in many ways, a place where my common sense doesn't apply.

"Father 1, is the test run complete?"

When I asked, Jaid paused for a moment before answering.

「That's true. Although things have turned out quite differently than planned, I can see that you have the skills to more than adequately use Durandal's Vantour.

Let's leave it here for today."

"roger that"

Letting out a small sigh, I turned the VanTour around to head back to the hangar.

Just then, the forced stop seemed to be lifted, and Arrow The second Wanzer began to move, but of course it didn't try to attack me; instead, it just silently watched me leave.

"Well, that's amazing! Arrow How dare you just take out two and four with two pairs of numbers !"



When I put the VanTour in the hangar and went to the central control room, Hermes called out to me excitedly, as if she had been waiting for me to see her.

"Especially the tactic you used on Alo 12, firing the machine gun and shotgun at the same time! I knew about it from the recorded images, but this was the first time I saw it being used in real life! I have the data on how the Batchiri works, so I'd like to use it as reference material. Is that okay?"

"Yeah, of course I don't mind that."

Feeling like a kid who'd just seen a funny movie, I replied, »But it doesn't always work. It worked surprisingly well today, though.«

"Yeah, I know, I know. I mean, if this tactic was guaranteed to be effective no matter when, where or who used it, it would have been adopted by the regular army a long time ago. It's precisely because this tactic is still incomplete that it's worth researching anew."

Hermes grinned knowingly.

"Also, the fact that it went better this time than before suggests that the faster the aircraft's reaction time, the easier it is to carry out this strategy. If we can unravel this relationship, I'm sure we'll get some interesting results!"

"Well, that's enough of your calculations."

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Zead told Hermes with a wry smile, then turned his gaze towards me.

"It was hard work, Elsa.

will have no choice but to acknowledge your excellence."

Are they members of Durandal?"

Though it was a little late to ask, I asked just to be sure, and Zead nodded slightly.

"Yes, that's right. They are currently being punished for disobeying orders, but once that is over I will introduce them to you in person."

"Punishment, huh?"

At the ominous tone of his words, I felt my face stiffen a little. At that, Hermes exaggeratedly shrugged her shoulders and shook her head.

"Even if it's your own fault, that's harsh, Zead."

"It can't be helped. Even though Durandal is not a military force, if each member ignores the orders of their superiors and acts as they please, it cannot function as an organization."

Zead responded firmly, his expression tightening. In response, Hermes groaned with a look of genuine disgust on his face.

"I know that, but I want to make sure all the temporary toilets on the grounds are clean by the evening.

Cleaning a room is a big job. Even if you hire a professional, it will take half a day.

«:• • Is the punishment cleaning the toilet?"

I asked Zead in a relaxed voice, to which he replied in the affirmative with a serious expression.

"Yes, that's right. We can't put them in a barracks like in the military, and on the other hand, cutting their pay or stopping pay raises like in a private company won't have much effect on them. If we were to behead them, we would be in trouble."

".••••Ah."

Still, cleaning the toilets is a punishment for disobeying orders, I thought to myself, and sighed. In other words, it's probably the same as making clumsy recruits or lazy soldiers run 20 laps around the field or do 100 push-ups in addition to their regular training.

Then Hermes spoke, also in a fairly serious tone.

"Just because it's toilet cleaning doesn't mean you can take it lightly. Because they're temporary toilets, they don't have any automatic cleaning devices. Everything has to be done by hand. It's really hard work."

"You seem to know a lot about it. Have you ever been forced to do it yourself?"

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When I asked, Hermes' expression suddenly took on a complicated and complicated tone, and she let out unintelligible sounds like»uuuh»and»ah.»

Then Zead spoke with a wry smile.

it would be best if I never had to experience what cleaning toilets is really like as a punishment.

More importantly, Elsa, you're the Arrow we just fought. 2 and Arrow Have you had any feelings about the two of them, number 4?"

"What did you feel?"

When I asked him back, Zead continued, choosing his words carefully.

"So, what do you think about their fighting skills?"

«The Arrow 2 left me with the impression that there was something unbalanced about it. Its ability to close the distance was extremely swift and skillful, yet its marksmanship was disproportionately low. Perhaps the weapon used in regular Wanzer combat is not a shotgun,»I replied, remembering the mock battle earlier.

Regarding Arrow 4, even before you get to combat skill, I think they haven't acquired the basic knowledge that each Wanzer's weapon has a different effective range, and that you must always maintain the distance that gives your weapon the advantage.

### Front Mission 4 I

Also, I was a little surprised that Arrow 2 and Arrow 4 didn't cooperate at all. If they had cooperated at all, it would have significantly reduced our chances of victory."

"Hmm, that's an accurate observation."

Zead nodded vigorously in satisfaction.

I believe that the basis of tactical research, not just in VanTours, is the steady accumulation of data and the observational skills to correctly interpret that data. In modern times, data accumulation has been largely done by machines, but the observational skills to make the most of that data can only be honed by each individual through experience. Elsa, it seems that you have the qualities to become an excellent VanTour tactical researcher.»"Oh, really?"

I don't think I'd said anything particularly clever, I thought to myself, but as long as my boss appreciated it, I guess that was fine.

At this point, Hermes interjected in a light-hearted tone.

"Well, if you try too hard from the first day and cram too much into it, you'll just end up tiring yourself out and your efficiency will go down, you know. I think this is more than enough for today.

Hey, Zead?"

"That's right. If you're tired, please rest at the dorms."



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Saying that, Zead glanced at the clock.

"Apparently, there will be a party to welcome the new members, that is, you, in the dining hall from seven o'clock. Most of the headquarters staff will be attending, so I would like you to attend if possible. Arrow 2 and Arrow Number 4 will probably finish cleaning the toilets by then too."

"Yes, I understand"

Unless there was an emergency, welcoming parties for new recruits were common in the military. However, it was only in name a welcome, and in reality it was more of a rite of passage or a kind of test, and it was not uncommon for them to make the recruits wear eccentric costumes, force them to drink copious amounts of alcohol, or simply bully them. And they surely really love festivals and parties, Hermes announced with a very cheerful tone.

"That's right, it's not like it's customary, but you might be asked to give a speech, so I think it's a good idea to think of something, like a greeting or an introduction.

Well, in the past, there were some unsociable people who would just say their name and then that was it, and on the other hand, there were some people who chatted on and on and on and earned a bad reputation."

"I see."

Could that be Arrow 2 and Arrow 4? I wondered silently. The latter could be Hermes himself, but if so, he probably doesn't know it.

Wax.

"So, what should we do? Shall we rest in the dorms until the welcoming party starts?"

"Well, I'm not that tired though. If you don't mind, could you tell me a bit more about Durandal?"

When I poured the water over her, Hermes nodded, her eyes shining. "Of course. No problem, right, Zead?"

"Oh, you have some spare time at work, so please go and talk to Elsa."

Saying that, Zead gave a wry smile.

"If you have time, I would like to join the discussion, but unfortunately, I have a mountain of desk work that needs to be completed by the end of today. I'd like to finish it somehow in time for the welcoming party.»"Wow, that's a lot of work. I hope you'll consider it."

Briefing room

With a rather mild encouragement from Hermes, Zead left the central control room.

Then Hermes asks me.

Shall we go together? Should we stay in central control? Or should we go to the break room?"

"This is fine."

Saying that, I sat down in the nearest available chair.

"Zead is Father 1, and you are Father 2. And I, the new recruit, am Arrow. The number six

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"-So there are at least five other members, from Alo 11 to 5. Zead said that I'm the eighth Wanzer pilot belonging to the Tactical Research Department, but does that include you and Zead?"

"Ah, Zead and I are the only ones with Father Numbers, and there are currently no member codes other than Father and Arrow, so there are a total of eight members of the Durandal Tactical Research Department. All of us are Wanzer pilots. Well, there are many other staff members, such as operators, maintenance staff, pilots, facility security staff, office staff, and cafeteria staff, but they are temporary staff and not exclusively employed by Durandal."

As she answered, Hermes, perhaps out of habit, called up data one after another onto the terminal on her desk.

"Among those, the five of us who are currently at HQ are you, Zead, and myself, as well as Arrow 2 and Arrow 4 who we met earlier. The other three are out on business. Arrow 3 is scheduled to return to HQ in two or three days if there are no particular problems, but it looks like Arrow 1 and Arrow 5 will be staying there for around six months."

"Is that so"

It's true that I was suddenly curious as to where the two members sent from the newly established Durandal were and what they were doing for six months.

I can't decide if it's something I should know or not.

So I started by asking him about his current concerns.

"So, how did that member end up joining Durandal? I was encouraged by a superior officer in the French military to transfer, and I accepted."

"Yes, there are other members like that, but on the other hand, there are also members like me who left their original place and joined Durandal of their own accord."

Hermes said, shrugging.

"Since I'm on the management side, I know the circumstances of each member, but it's essentially a matter of privacy. I can't really say much about it. If you want to know more, please ask the person directly.»

"That's right."

Honestly, I was relieved that you didn't start blabbering about my personal information, I thought to myself, giddy with laughter.

"So can you tell me your story?"

«Oh yeah, I'm originally from the U.S.N.»

Hermes began speaking nonchalantly, but I looked at him in some surprise.

Relations between the E.C. and the U.S.-N. are not as bad as those between the U.S. and the United States, which were at war until a few years ago.

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However, it is by no means a good situation. More than 100 years ago, a group of people who advocated independence and the establishment of a democratic government on the Portuguese island of Madeira in the Atlantic Ocean were forced into exile by the Portuguese government. They persistently continued the Madeira independence movement in various countries, but when the United States of America was established, they insisted that Madeira should leave its colonial power, W, and join the United States of America. The scale of the issue grew when the United States of America government officially expressed support for their claim. New Continent

E.C. consistently supported Portugal, a member state, and the U.S.N. government's interest in Madeira. New York The United States has criticized the move as unjust and aggressive, but the United States has said that E.C. should listen to the voice of the Madeiran people who want freedom and independence. Fortunately, there have been no armed conflicts so far. New Continent However, in recent years, a research vessel dispatched by a Madeira independence movement group based in the U.S. announced that there may be a valuable mineral deposit on the seabed near Madeira, and so Portugal has begun to investigate the possibility of such a situation. New Continent in which the Russian Navy used force to drive away a second wave of research vessels, leading to the U.S.N. government issuing a statement of condemnation.

Under such circumstances, not only private companies, but also the military of each country, as well as many governments and public institutions, have practically barred people from the U.S.-N. for confidentiality reasons. And yet, Father Number New Continent, one of the core executives of Durandal, which is authorized as an E.C. land - based new tactics research institute, I never would have imagined that one of the management members would be from the U.S. or Canada.

And Hermes, perhaps not noticing my surprise, continued her story in a very light-hearted tone.

I've loved computers and van tours. And, as the saying goes, if you love something, you're good at it, and I know it sounds like I'm bragging, but I was recognized as being quite good in those areas. I skipped a grade and graduated from university, and was scouted by a research lab at a company that makes van tours, and without really thinking about it, I decided to go there.

But then the Sakata Industries incident happened."

Hermes said, shrugging her shoulders vigorously.

don't know if it was good luck or bad luck, but the place where I was scouted and was about to join was the very Sakata Industry U.S.N. Research Center."

"Yeeeeesss!"

I too was astonished at this.

"Th-that's it ....."

"Yeah, if the incident had been revealed a year or two later, I would have been completely embroiled in it. At worst, I might have been forced to research the infamous Bio-Neural Device, which uses the human brain to control van tours.»

With a deep sigh, Hermes was quiet for a moment. I didn't know what to say.

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We were both silent. After about ten seconds, he started talking again, but that silence felt terribly long to me.

"Once the incident was exposed, Sakata Industry was thrown into chaos, as you would expect, and the scouting talks fell through. Of course, even if I had been asked to come, I probably wouldn't have gone. This incident made me realize just how naive, vulnerable, and irresponsible I had been. I never thought about quitting my involvement with computers and van tours, but I vowed to myself that I would gather as much information as I could on my own, and then carefully consider and think carefully about what I would do and where I would do it."

"So, you decided to come all the way to E.C. and join Durandal?»I

asked, and Hermes nodded with a wry smile.

"In the end, that's what it comes down to.

In fact, after gathering various pieces of information, I found that the university I attended was connected to the U.S. military and large defense contractors through some pretty dodgy connections, though I wouldn't say it was completely cozy. At the time, in the aftermath of the Sakata Industries scandal, that network was temporarily inactive, but I thought that if I continued to hang around the U.S. military, I would definitely get caught sooner or later.

Then, Zead, who had read my paper online, invited me to join him.

I decided to go to England."

"So you were personally scouted by Zead.»I see, that's why Zead thinks highly of Hermes, I thought. Hermes then responded with a serious look on her face.

"That's true, but the other members were also chosen directly by Gide. In your case, there were several candidates submitted by the French army, and Gide personally nominated you."

"Eh? Is that so?"

Hermes' unexpected remark.

"But why me?"

"That's something I don't know. If you want to know, ask Zead directly,»Hermes replied, finally smiling.

"But I have to say, I'm really impressed with Zead's keen eye for discovering talented people. Whether it's your skill in Wanzer combat or your ability to observe your opponents, there's no doubt that you're an exceptional person."

« Well, leaving me aside, if the other members were personally selected by Zead, does that mean they are all exceptionally talented?



## Mission 1 Elsa Joins the Army

that this was a bit of a tricky question, but Hermes quickly nodded.»Yes, that's right. They're all extraordinary in different ways, but they're all far from being ordinary people. On the other hand, some of them have quirks in their personalities."

"Yeah, I think I understand that."

Thinking of Arrow 2 and 4, I nodded. Even Hermes was far from normal, and Zead seemed like a decent soldier, but it seemed like the commander himself was the one who selected these eccentric members for his unit.

"So, in the end, can we say that Durandal is, in effect, acting solely at Zead's discretion?"

"At least, that's the current situation, that's for sure."

Hermes is light and rich.

"For the time being, command of Durandal is in the hands of the E.C. Assembly, but it hasn't been decided who will be in charge and how. And to begin with, there's no one above Zead who can take responsibility.

There's no reason why we should have to take orders from someone who won't take responsibility for us, right?"

"That's right."

There are many people in the world who like to give orders but refuse to take responsibility when the time comes.

I added silently.

"You've finally come."

It was about 30 minutes into the welcoming party that Zead glared at the men and women in work uniforms who had entered the dining hall, and gave a wry smile.

I had already given the standard speech as requested, and had been introduced to the main operators, maintenance officers, pilots, security officers, administrative officers, medical officers, and vendors, and had just finished greeting them. Normally, a mere NCO like me would not be treated so grandly when transferred, let alone a senior officer of the executive rank. It seemed that Durandal members selected by Zead would be given the same status as officers, regardless of their previous rank or status.»Elsa, let me introduce you. This is Arrow. No. 2, Latona Rodiona Vasilev, this is Arrow 4, Beck Canova, a member of the Durandal corps.

This is the newest recruit in Arrow 6, Elsa Eliane."

"I'm Elsa Eliane. Nice to meet you."

After being introduced by Zead, I politely greeted the two tall men and women. The man from Arrow 4 immediately put on a big smile and extended his hand.

"I'm Beck. Nice to meet you. It seems that you're the one who's more skilled than me when it comes to Van Tour combat.

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It seems to be one or even two steps above that.”

“Well, I'm sorry to hear that you've joined a team that's even worse than you,»Arrow said, looking back at Beck as he shook my hand. The woman in the second section spoke in a harsh tone.»But I'm also being treated the same as this loser, that's a problem. What do you think about that, Arrow 6?”

“Well, if you and I were to both equip our Van Tours with melee weapons and have a mock battle, I'm pretty sure the outcome would be the opposite of today's,»I replied, expecting she might get involved.»And if you were to equip a melee weapon and I were to equip a gun, whatever the outcome, I think it would make for a pretty interesting mock battle.”

“Hmm”

Latona tilted her head slightly and stared at me, as if to say something clever.

“What made you think I'd be stronger in a hand-to-hand fight?”

| Shotgun

«The speed at which he closed the distance was incredible. For a moment I thought he was punching me without firing a shotgun.”

Saying that, I gave a small laugh.

“In the French military, where I served, there were pilots who were good at dogfighting. But there were not many pilots like that.

It was my first time having someone close the distance between us so tightly."

"Yeah, that was the first time I'd been hit by both machine gun fire and shotgun fire at the same time while closing in on an enemy,»Latona groaned in a subtle mix of admiration and frustration.

"If it had only been one, I was confident I could have closed the distance, but both... I don't know if I would have [REDACTED] been able to dodge them if I had been using my usual machine. Either way, I respect your skill."

"thank you"

I held out my hand, Latona accepted, and we shook hands.

Then Betku put her hand to her forehead, made exaggerated gestures, and lamented in a hushed voice,»Hey, you two. Why are you all here together talking about such bleak things? Don't you have something more interesting to talk about?"

"I'm a Wanzer pilot first and foremost. What's wrong with two pilots getting so excited talking about Wanzer combat?"

Latona retorted, a little angrily. Then she turned to me and said firmly :

「Listen, Elsa. Don't bother with this guy.

Wanzers, terrible at fighting, has no military experience, and is n't a computer genius like Hermes. The only things he's good at are talking about food and alcohol, and flirting with women.

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"All he can do is fight, so I still don't understand why Zead chose someone like him to be a member of his corps.»

"My goodness, that's quite something to say."

Betku didn't seem particularly bothered and smiled brightly.

"Latona, I don't dislike your bluntness or bad manners, but unfortunately the world is not as tolerant as I am.

Before I took over as negotiator with the client, you had successfully scrapped two, or maybe three, Wanzer testing projects that Durandal had taken on in the space of just two weeks, right?"

"That's not my fault! The client's demands change all the time, and they keep bringing up all sorts of things that aren't directly related to the project!»Latona yelled in an exasperated manner, causing the people around her, especially the office staff and contractors, to shrug their shoulders and quickly distance themselves.

But Beck, at least on the surface, remains completely calm as he tells an indignant Latona :

"Yes, you're right, the fault lies with the client. But it's us, not them, who are in trouble when projects are cancelled one after another.

So I, who can talk about everyday things and am patient, was appointed to be the negotiator."

"Who has the patience, you slacker?"

Latona roared furiously, but I thought that Beck was a very patient man, or rather, resilient, even if he was a slacker.

Otherwise, it would have been extremely difficult to team up with Latona, who was obviously short-tempered and had a temper.

# MISSION 2

Elsa's  
First  
Battle

The morning after the welcome party, I was fast asleep in my room at the accommodation when I was woken up by a phone call from Zead in the early hours of the morning.

I'm sorry to bother you at this late hour, but I have suddenly decided to go to Germany. I'd like you to accompany me.

So please get ready as quickly as possible and come to the central control room."

"Yes, I'll be there in two minutes."

As soon as he said that, I immediately jumped up, changed my clothes in 30 seconds, grabbed my backpack and headed to the central control room. If you can't do this kind of thing, you can't call yourself a proper soldier, which is a tradition passed down through the Eliane family for generations.

"That was fast. As expected."

Zead looked at me, who had really only taken two minutes to arrive, and smiled.

"However, Hermes will be accompanying us this time, so we must wait for him to arrive. We've been ordered to investigate, and we can't leave our analyst behind."

"May I ask what the mission entails?"

I asked in a pure NCO tone, and Zead's smile turned into a wry one as he responded.



## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

"Let's discuss that once Hermes arrives. We'll have time to travel, so there's no need to rush. Also, it's fine while we're aboard the Wanzer, but when we speak directly, I would like you to avoid using a military tone as much as possible. Hermes dislikes it, and I tend to fall for it.»"Understood, [redacted] I get it."

When I repeated myself hesitantly, Zead nodded gently.»It's difficult to suddenly change habits you've acquired, but I know you can do it. Just make a conscious effort to be flexible in your thinking and respond accordingly."

"yes"

Just as I was nodding, Hermes came in.

"What's wrong, Zead? Going to Germany at this time of night?»"I've just ordered Durandal to carry out an emergency investigation mission on behalf of the E.C. Council,»Zead's expression instantly tightened as he stated in a forceful tone.

"Tonight, between 2:30 and 3:30, five army bases in Germany were destroyed almost simultaneously. We are being told to make every effort to quickly investigate whether this was an accident or a crime, and if it was a crime, who was responsible."

"Five bases destroyed at the same time?"

Hermes yelled, eyes wide.

"Sorry, it definitely wasn't an accident!"

"That may be so. However, it seems that many of the leaders and people involved in the E.C. countries believe that the assumption that someone attacked and destroyed the entire country is just as unrealistic as the assumption that multiple fatal accidents would occur simultaneously.

Anyway, I'll have to actually check it out before I can comment."

Saying that, Zead looked at Hermes.

"And that is why we are currently preparing to dispatch a transport plane. I'll leave it to Hermes to pilot it.»"At this point, we don't know much about the details of the situation, other than that five bases have been completely destroyed, and no survivors have been confirmed.

We will first fly to Berlin and receive information from the emergency investigation headquarters set up by the German military. Then we will fly to the site and conduct an on-site investigation of the destroyed base.' A transport plane, ready for deployment, hastily took off from the headquarters' airfield, and Hermes was at the controls.

After switching over to automatic, Zead told us both that this time, unlike when we flew from France to HQ, both Zead and I were in the cockpit with the pilot.

Then Hermes asked Zead with a slightly dissatisfied look on her face.

"Are the Germans starting an investigation separately from us?"

## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

"Of course. It was a German military base that was destroyed."

Zead responded with a serious face.

"If anything, we're the ones who are the irregulars. Apparently Prime Minister Norland proposed sending Durandal, but the German Chancellor didn't seem too happy about it.»"You mean Prime Minister Norland, the British Prime Minister, right?»I asked, and Zead nodded slightly.

"That's right. The news of the destruction of the German military base was urgently reported to the leaders of the E.C. countries, and a video conference was hastily held. According to the E.C. regulations, the summit can temporarily exercise the authority of the E.C. parliament if necessary, so it was able to issue formal orders to Durandal.»"But if there was talk of an investigation or an audit in the German military, wouldn't Brigadier General Glaser and Blauer Nebel be the ones to show up?

I don't want to have anything to do with those guys."

Hermes groaned, frowning.

Then, Zead smiled, a smile that seemed a little more bitter than his usual one.»You've hit the jackpot. It seems the head of the emergency investigation headquarters in Berlin is Brigadier General Glaser."

"Wow, I thought so!"

Hermes dramatically held her head in her hands, thinking that she wouldn't be happy at all if such a prediction came true.

Then, Zead explained to me, who had been listening to the story with a somewhat stunned look on his face.

"Brigadier General Glaser of the German Army is the commander of the Special Task Force Blauer Nebel. Though he can be a little too cold-hearted, he is a capable and energetic soldier. However, he and Hermes don't seem to get along well.»"That's not an easy thing to say! Just thinking about his cold-blooded, Frankenstein - monster -like face gives me goosebumps! It's a real, real physiological rejection reaction !"

"It's not just goosebumps, it's like I've got hives,»Hermes said, scratching his chest.

"And to say he's a little too cold-hearted is a gross understatement! I don't think it would be too much to call him a cold-hearted sadist, the epitome of tyranny and arrogance, a typical fascist soldier with a penchant for power and racism.»

"You're free to think that, but we shouldn't give Elsa any excessive preconceptions,»I replied calmly, and Zead looked at me again.

"We won't know until we get there whether the German troops will be cooperative or not, but either way, we must carry out our mission in our own way and achieve results.

this opportunity to show the E.C. nations that Durandal is a useful organization, we won't be able to gather new members, let alone have a future, seriously."

## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

"yes"

I nodded, my expression tightening. However, the situation was more severe than I had imagined.»To put it bluntly, your intervention is nothing but a nuisance to us. We cannot hand over any information unless it is decided by the E.C. Summit, so I would like to ask you to leave Germany immediately.»

Brigadier General Glaser, head of the German military's emergency investigation headquarters, stated arrogantly as he fixed Zead with cold, shining eyes.

Zead was by no means short, but in front of Glaser he looked a little stocky. He was nearly two meters tall, with shoulder width and a deep chest that matched his height, and his head was completely shaved, with barely any eyebrows. The German brigadier general had such a monstrous appearance that a timid child would probably burst into tears just by looking at him, and he had a frown that looked like the height of sulkiness.

« ....Just like a Frost Giant."

Hermes called Glaser a Frankenstein monster, but I thought of the Germanic god Jotunheim, the frost giant who always has a gloomy expression on his face, and who is a resident of the frozen world in the tale of the Frost Giant. In the myth, it is said that the frost giant never smiles until the day he attacks the heavens in the final war of the world.

Brigadier General Glaser's smile is just as hard to imagine.

And Zead, the frost giant... No, he told Brigadier Glaser in a sincere tone.

"Of course, we have no intention of hindering the German military's investigation, and we will be sure to share any information we obtain with you. But still, is our presence a nuisance?"

"Exactly.

As you know, I am always careful about maintaining confidentiality. If important information were to leak, whether intentionally or accidentally, no organization would be able to function properly."

Staring fixedly at Zead, Glaser continued speaking in a raspy voice. His gaze was not just cold, but I felt there was some intense malice lurking in it.»I don't necessarily believe that my subordinates are perfect when it comes to keeping secrets, but I have still done my best. At the very least, as far as I can see, they are trustworthy. However, unfortunately, the subordinates you are currently in charge of are completely untrustworthy. After all, they are a mixed bag of civilians and foreigners. It would be impossible to expect any decent soldier to trust them.»"Thank you for your kind words, but I do trust my subordinates. They are not soldiers who were assigned to me based on a simple order, but subordinates I chose myself."

## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

Meeting Glazer's gaze, Zead calmly and confidently replied,»No matter what their background is, or what their nationality is, I guarantee that all members of Durandal are worthy of your complete trust."

"Your guarantee is worthless."

In a voice filled with cold venom, Glaser declares :

"It's up to you whether you trust your subordinates or not. However, I don't have much faith in your ability to judge people. I've had bad experiences like that before."

"It is unfortunate that Your Excellency does not believe us, but we too must carry out the mission given to us by the E.C. Summit.

If you tell me that you cannot hand over the information to Durandal due to suspicion of confidential information leaking, I will report that to you and begin my own investigation."

Without changing his tone at all, Zead retorted head-on.

Glaser responds bitterly.

"I have no intention of going against the decision of the E.C. Summit.

Although I am reluctant, I will hand over the information. However, if any information is leaked, you will be held responsible.»

"At your discretion."

Zead responded calmly, and a small man who seemed to be Glazer's secretary handed him the file on the data disk.

If it was prepared from the beginning, he should have just handed it over without being nasty, I thought to myself, without saying a word.

Then, with a slight bow, Zead accepted the data disk and asked Glazer in a matter-of-fact tone.

"By the way, we would like to go to the site and investigate. Do you have permission?"

"Even if I don't give you permission, if you use the decision of the E.C. Summit as a pretext, you can't stop Durandal's research. Do as you like,»Glaser replied with a look of bitterness on his face. However, since he had been wearing that expression from the beginning, it was unclear whether he was angry or not.

「However, my subordinate, Blauer Nebel, is currently investigating the matter. I will explain the situation to them, but please do not get in their way.

So, which of the five sites are you planning to go to?

"First, let's go to Saxony-Anhalt. The base there is the largest, if I remember correctly."

In response to Zead's reply, Glazer nodded with no amusement. sent Major Wagner, commander of Blauer Nebel, there."



## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

"I see. In that case, please give my best regards to the Major."

Well then, I'm sorry to bother you during your busy schedule,»said Zead as he was about to leave.»By the way, is that girl your secretary? Or a member of Durandal?»Glaser asked out of nowhere. My heart skipped a beat, but Zead answered calmly and without fuss.

"This is our newest member, Elsa Eliane. Before coming to Durandal, she was one of the leading Wanzer pilots in the French army."

you're from the French Ventours unit, you've never seen combat before,»Glaser said, not even trying to hide his contempt.

"Still, as an E.C. citizen with military experience, he may be one of the more respectable of your subordinates. Well, you should do your best not to cause trouble for the German army, and not to embarrass His Excellency the Prime Minister of England, who took the trouble to recommend you."

"Yes, since I have accepted the mission, I intend to do my best with all my might.»I thought for a moment that Zead would continue,»That goes without saying, His Excellency the Brigadier General,»but instead he urged me on.

"Let's go, Elsa."

"yes"

As I turned to leave, Glaser suddenly called out to me again.

"Hey, you."

"Yes, what is it?"

This time, he answered with courage, and Glaser spoke in a sarcastic tone.

"You probably don't know this, but that man was called Gide the Grim Reaper when he was in the British army. If you don't want to die young, it would be best for you to return to the French army as soon as possible."

«...:•excuse me"

Careful not to let the anger show on my face, I slowly retreated from the malicious frost giant.

"Well, I thought it would turn out like this."

On the transport plane heading from Berlin to the site in Saxony-Anhalt, Zead was dazzled and gave a wry smile.

"But Glaser has gotten old. He was n't the kind of man to make pointless remarks. It seems he was extremely upset that we, or rather, that I came to investigate.»"At best, you can make him angry. If he ends up severing a blood vessel in his brain and collapses, that would be the best thing."

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he's not the kind of guy that would die from something like that,»Hermes groaned. So, although I wasn't completely hesitant, I decided to ask Zead.

"Um, have you known the Brigadier General for some time?"

"Yeah, it's been almost twenty years since we first met. In a way, we may have become the worst kind of friends."

With a wry smile, Zead nodded.

"I served in the British Special Forces for a long time, often on overseas missions, and Glaser served in the German Special Forces, always in a similar position to me, but slightly more senior than me.

As is still the case today, England and Germany have long been allies of E. C., but they have also been fighting for dominance internally. Regardless of personal likes and dislikes, Glaser and I have often been at odds over our positions.

There were a few times when we worked together to solve cases, but rather than friendship or reconciliation, the result was new resentment. It's unfortunate, but what has come to pass is what can't be helped. They called me Zead the Grim Reaper, but we called him the Monster Glaser, so it's a draw, or maybe we're both just as bad."

«No matter who you are or where you look at him, Glaser is nothing but a monster."

Hermes interjected angrily.

"Besides, looking at the records from that time, several of Glaser's subordinates were killed in the line of duty, and the number of people who retired due to injuries or mental health issues was far greater in the German special forces. There's absolutely no reason for Zead to be called the Grim Reaper."

"Still, it's true that I lose colleagues and subordinates quite frequently. You could say it's the fate of a special forces unit that exposes itself to danger, but I can't help but be called the Grim Reaper."

Zead responded in a matter-of-fact tone.

"I believe that if the British Special Forces had been more proactive in introducing van tours, many of these tragedies could have been prevented, but there's no point in regretting what's happened in the past. We should think about the future."

"So, this is the investigative information that the monster Glazer handed over to us after all that fanfare. To be honest, it's old and mostly unconfirmed, so it's unlikely to be of any use. In fact, this morning's news had more detailed information about it,»Zead said with a grin at the indignant Hermes.

"If all they've received is stale, unconfirmed information, then even Glaser ca n't blame them for leaking it. If they've received any useful, valuable, top-secret information, I think that's far more frightening."

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"But it's no use, what can I do?"

Hermes shouted with an irritated look on his face.»Oh, he's unexpectedly impatient, even though the field survey hasn't even started yet,»I thought, widening my eyes. Perhaps it was the adverse effect of the Glaser allergy.

Then Zead's expression tightened and he spoke in a stern tone.»Calm down, Hermes. No matter who the other person is, information you receive from others is ultimately just secondary.

We must now investigate the situation, gather information on our own, and produce results. If we are too concerned about the movements of the German army and the Glaser, and neglect our own work, then we will end up putting the cart before the horse.

"Well, that's true."

As she spoke, Hermes scratched her head with an unsatisfied look on her face, when suddenly

The alarm control emits a notification sound, indicating that the input destination is approaching.»Oh no. We need to prepare for landing.»Hermes shrugs and heads for the control. Looking up, she sees several trails of black and grey smoke rising from the ground.

"This is terrible."

Looking down at the completely destroyed German base from the sky, Dido **was** overcome with emotion.»We have been informed by our commander about your visit,»Major Wagner, commander of the German Special Task Force Blau, Fu - Bell, told us over the communication screen in a rather melancholic tone.

"However, we are currently conducting an investigation at this base. We ask that you refrain from interfering with our investigation.»

"I understand that point, Director Glaser told me,»Zead replied, and Wagner, without changing his expression, made an outrageous announcement.»In that case, please don't get off that transport plane. Just wandering around an unexplored area is enough to interfere with our investigation.»"What?! That's ridiculous!"

Hermes who blurted out something on impulse, **Zead** patiently told Wagner,»That request cannot be accepted. We were also tasked with investigating on a mission from the **E.C.** Summit. We cannot conduct a proper investigation without even going to the site.»"We will let you know the results of our investigation first. Are you dissatisfied?»Zead replied immediately to the flat question.

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"We are not satisfied. We have the power and the obligation to conduct our own investigation."

"I don't think a bunch of amateurs will find anything out of their own investigation,»Wagner said as if it were the most obvious thing in the world, a comment that could only be interpreted as mocking. Unlike the imposing giant Glaser, Wagner's appearance on the communication screen was so neat and tidy that it gave the impression of being a little artificial. And I could not sense the malice or venom that Glaser exuded so strongly from this person. I thought that to Wagner, our existence was merely a kind of impurity not worthy of any special attention.

After a moment of reflection, Wagner spoke calmly.

"Now, I will allow you to conduct your own investigation, confined to the locations and materials we have already examined.

However, careless changes to the status quo are strictly prohibited. If you wish to carry out any analysis of the materials that may be even slightly destructive, please request it here. If we deem it necessary, we will analyze it and give you the results.»"You've got to be kidding me! There's no way you can investigate without analyzing it yourself!»Hermes, the analyst, yelled in an exasperated voice. Wagner then asked, looking very depressed.

"That's surprising. Are you saying that Blauer Nebel's analysis is unreliable?»And without waiting for a reply, he continued.

"Either way, this is the maximum concession we can make.

If these conditions are not acceptable to you, we will ask you to leave immediately and will use force to remove you if you do not comply."

"Is that a threat?"

When Zead asked sharply, Wagner answered calmly.

"No. I don't make empty threats. I always carry out what I say I will do. If you are dissatisfied with my response, feel free to appeal to the E.C. Summit or to the British Prime Minister. I have done nothing wrong. I would rather have this matter settled in a public forum.»

"Uh huh."

Zead groaned as he glared at Wagner's aristocratic beauty, but he must have decided that things wouldn't get any better if things continued like this. He responded without even trying to hide the bitterness in his tone.

"It can't be helped. I will accept your conditions. However, I will make sure to officially report to the E.C. Summit and the Assembly the fact that you have imposed conditions limiting our on-site investigation.»«Very well. I will then send you a list of the locations where we have completed our investigation and the materials we have collected. That's all,»and with that, Wagner ended the call. At the same time, Hermes furiously attacked Zead.



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"Why did you accept such unreasonable conditions, Zead? How can you investigate something when you can't even analyze the documents? It's ridiculous!"

"But if we had not accepted the terms, Major Wagner would have had no qualms about firing his guns to drive us away. He was definitely serious."

Zead responded with an expression that could be described as sorrowful.

"The last time I met him he was a quiet, taciturn young man, not particularly conspicuous given his appearance. This Wagner man has transformed himself beautifully. If he's not careful, he could be even more formidable than the monster Glaser.»"If Glaser is a Frankenstein monster, then the more formidable and handsome Wagner must be a vampire or something. Does the German army have a collection of shape-shifting monsters?"

Hermes cracked a joke to try and vent his anger, probably knowing full well that he had no other way to deal with the situation.

"So, what should we do?"

"Once we receive the list from Blauer Nebel, we will immediately begin a field investigation. No matter how limited and incomplete the investigation, it is better to do it than not to do it at all.»

Jid replied immediately and looked at me.

"You never know what's going to happen. We'll use a van tour for the investigation. We'll be ready to go at any time."

Please have it ready."

"yes"

Feeling nervous, I nodded. Yes, this was a battlefield in a sense, and enemy territory at that.

"This is troubling. I'm completely at a loss."

Hermes sighed deeply and groaned.

"Well, I'm prohibited from collecting data or analyzing it myself, so there's nothing I can do about it."

"But some things have become quite clear."

Zead responded while looking at the data displayed on the monitor.

"In particular, the fact that the remains of several Venturers that were not German were found abandoned at the scene is extremely important. It's direct evidence that it was a Venturer attack that destroyed the base."

"Well, that's true. But we can deduce that much from the extent of the damage. The question is, what kind of Wanzer was responsible for destroying a German base,»Hermes growled in irritation.

«Browneuil's analysts say the wreckage is so badly damaged that it's impossible to determine its country of origin.

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But I don't think there's any way around that. I think we could get a lot of information from just one remaining chip or part."

"However, the fact that the attackers abandoned the remains instead of recovering them suggests that they are confident that their identity will not be identified even if thoroughly analyzed. I did request that we analyze it directly, but to be honest, I don't think there is any cutting corners in Blauer Nebel's analysis.

Zead continued speaking with a thoughtful look on his face.

"According to the documents, it's highly likely that the abandoned Wanzers had powerful self-destruct mechanisms built into each of their joints, and they've barely retained their original form. They were probably disposed of meticulously so as not to leave a single chip or part intact.»

"It looks like fragments of what appears to be completely charred human body were found in the remains of the cockpit. Either the pilot didn't eject and was killed in action, which triggered the self-destruct mechanism, or the aircraft became inoperable and the pilot chose to self-destruct rather than eject. Either way, it's a terrible story,»Hermes growled, his expression looking increasingly bitter.

"Normally, the only time a Wanzer pilot is killed in battle is when they escape from a disabled unit and are caught up in a Wanzer battle and die. But it seems this Wanzer doesn't even have an escape mechanism, which is quite shocking."

the pilots who escaped from German Wanzers, along with their escape gear, massacring every single one of them. They appear to have had no regard for the lives of others or their own."

Saying that, Zead sighed deeply.

it is true that special infiltration units in any military operate on similar principles, although to varying degrees. Eliminate your target and take no prisoners. Eliminate witnesses as much as possible, even if they are non-combatants. And if you are about to be captured, commit suicide.

They are a symbol of the dark side of the military, but the British military does have such units. Fortunately, as far as I know, they have never been deployed in actual combat.»«So, is it true that this attack was carried out by some military force, or rather a national organization?»

When I asked, Jido nodded with a sad expression.

There are no private organizations operating within the E.C. Region that have the capacity to carry out such a large-scale and well-planned attack, although it's not impossible to say that there aren't any in the world.

Well, it's possible that the perpetrator of the attack was a member of an international terrorist organization, but even in that case, it would be impossible unless they had the full backing of a certain nation.»"Either way, there's not enough data to go any further than this, data!"

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Hermes slammed the desk violently and shouted.

"Even though the Wanzer left behind by the attackers is right in front of us, we can't even touch it ! How ridiculous!"

"However, no matter how much we protest, I don't think Wagner will change his attitude,»Zead replied, shaking his head.

"While Elsa and I were investigating the permitted locations, there was always at least one Blauer Nebel Wanzer standing guard. If we did anything strange, it felt like they would open fire on us immediately."

"What tyrannical, stubborn Germans!"

Hermes is extremely indignant, but no amount of anger will change anything.

Then Jaid turned to me and asked,

"Well then, Elsa. Do you have any ideas for a solution?"

"That's true. If the other person's attitude doesn't change, then perhaps we should try changing our target instead."

As I organize my thoughts, I slowly begin to speak.

"As for who the attackers are, I think it's difficult to narrow it down beyond the possibility that they're some kind of national organization, or perhaps a Wanzer unit trained for special infiltration operations. The attackers are probably

They will most carefully disguise the points."

"HM"

Zead nodded, so I continued speaking.

"However, there are many mysteries surrounding the attackers other than just who they were. How did they get close to the base without being noticed, and how did they succeed in their attack? And after destroying the base, how did they disappear, where did they go, and where are they now? Why not try to deduce these points?"

What is this?

"I see. So the focus isn't on who did it, but how it was done,»Jid asks me, nodding again.

"So, do you have any theories?"

"Yes. This might be a bit long-winded, but please hear me out."

So I began to explain.

"Normally, when we think of a surprise attack by a Wing Commander, the first thing that comes to mind is an airborne landing from a transport plane, but it is highly unlikely that this attack force was transported by plane. This is because all five destroyed bases belonged to the army, and the air force, which is the main force defending German airspace, was completely unharmed both before and after the attack.

Apparently, a super-high performance stealth transport plane capable of evading German air force surveillance was used.

## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

That's possible, but even if that's the case, if they're sending troops in from the air, the first place they should attack would be the air base."

"That's certainly true."

It seemed that her anger had subsided, as Hermes nodded with a relatively calm expression.»The air surveillance radars installed at German air bases are the best in the world when it comes to monitoring aircraft, and after news of the destruction of the base came in, they've also sent out air patrol planes in addition to that. At the very least, if they tried to use aircraft to recover the assault force, I think they would be detected, no matter how high their stealth capabilities."

"I see. If we invade by aircraft, there's no point in having the aircraft retrieve us when we retreat,»Zead groaned, supporting his chin with his hand.

"And in that case, they would have had to hit the German air force before they retreated, but in fact it was army bases that were attacked, not air bases.

In other words, it is natural to think that aircraft were not used in the invasion or withdrawal from the start.»"Yes, that's right."

Seeing that the two of them seemed to understand, I continued my explanation.

"Also, although it's a bit weak to call it circumstantial evidence, I think the reason the attackers abandoned the van was because they needed to retreat by land.

"Even if they were prepared to retrieve it, it would be better to do so if possible. Besides, the base that was attacked was destroyed, so it's not in a position to be pursued right away."

"I see"

Zead nodded, but then Hermes raised an objection.

"Ah, but wait a moment. When you say the Wanzers retreated by land on their own, you don't mean armed Wanzers retreating on foot along the Autobahn or something, right? Even if it was the middle of the night, I don't think that would be possible."

they probably have a trailer for transporting van tours prepared near the base. With a bit of disguise it could look like an ordinary large trailer, right?»Hermes looked convinced at my answer.

"Ah, I see. It's true that a trailer would n't be as conspicuous as the Wanzer itself. Besides, a regular Wanzer transport trailer can only be disguised so as not to attract attention, and a Wanzer with such extensive damage can't be loaded onto it, so the only option is to have it self-destruct and then abandon it. It looks like this will be fine."

"Well, it's still just a hypothesis, but it's a pretty strong one."

Saying that, Jed looked at me.

"The assembly and withdrawal from the attack site can be explained by using trailer trucks to travel overland.



## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

However, when invading E.C. territory from outside, you can't just line up several disguised trailers carrying Van Tours. Currently, E.C. has restrictions on imports from outside its territory, so if you do something like that, you'll inevitably stand out.»"You don't have to force your way in all at once; why not just invade in different places and at different times so as not to draw attention?"

Hermes pointed this out, but Zead shook his head.

"No, the more they spread out, the greater the risk. If even one of them is discovered by customs, it will completely upend the whole plan. Sending in the Wanzers too early is also risky, considering the need to conceal it afterwards. If it were me, I would avoid it at all costs."

«Hmm, so the land route is no good."

Hermes tilted her head, dazzling her.

«But if they're going to bring in the Wanzers by plane, they might as well just do an airborne operation from the start, right?»"That's right. If they can break through the E.C. Area border, where anti-aircraft surveillance is the strictest, they should be able to penetrate to a point where they can attack the target directly. It seems nonsensical to them to transport the Wanzers by air and not do an airborne operation."

As I responded, I switched the display on the monitor to a map of the entire state of E.C.

"If there is no land or air route, the only option left is the sea route.

I don't know much about E.C.'s maritime defenses, but is it too much to assume that they would have transported the Van Tours in a submarine, landed them somewhere on the coast of E.C. territory, and then transported them overland to the German base on trailers?

"That depends on the landing site."

Zead announced, staring intently at the map.

"Surveillance of the EC and coastline is just as strict as surveillance of the skies. In particular, an almost impenetrable surveillance network has been constructed in the Atlantic Ocean, with the Iberia Megafloat as an outpost.

And to the north, bases in The Hague, Kiel, Rostock, and Gdansk, and to the south in the Mediterranean Sea, bases in Mallorca, Corsica, Malta, and Crete are keeping a watchful eye. Is there really a place where a large number of van tours can slip through this surveillance network and secretly land in E.C. territory?

I don't think there's any coast here that isn't monitored by any base, at least according to the official data. If they were to leave such an unmonitored coast as it is, the E.C. Navy would just be stupid,»Hermes said sarcastically, as she brought up new data. The areas of responsibility of each base monitoring the coastline were displayed as circles with the base at their center, overlaid on the E.C. map. Looking at the display, Hermes nodded slightly.

## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

"Yes, as expected, the officially designated monitoring areas of each base completely cover the E.C. coastline. There are also quite a few areas that are monitored overlappingly by two neighboring bases. In theory, there are no gaps anywhere.»

Saying that, Hermes turned her gaze back to Zead and me and continued.

don't you think that in areas where there is supposed to be overlapping surveillance, there are times when the surveillance is weak? Maybe both sides assume that this area is safe because the neighboring base is also monitoring it."

"Well, I wonder."

Zead responded with a wry smile.

"However, even if we persist at this base for any longer, it will be difficult to achieve results that surpass those of Blauer Nebel's investigation.

If there's even the slightest chance of finding a clue about the attacker, we should take action."

"Then it's settled!"

Hermes, genuinely happy.

"So, where should we start? Maybe we should start from the nearby north side?"

"That's right. The borders within the E.C. region are less strict in terms of surveillance and inspections than the borders with the outside world, but it's still not a free pass. The borders that you have to cross before you can enter Germany are

The fewer the numbers, the better,»I replied, and Jid added.

"Also, of the four bases monitoring the northern coast, The Hague, Rostock, and Gdansk are bases of the E.C. Allied Navy, but Kiel is managed by the German Navy. That's why Kiel is said to have relatively poor coordination with the other bases."

"I see.

Well then, let's start by looking here."

When Hermes operated the key, the color of the surveillance area under Keel Base's jurisdiction changed.

"God, just how nasty can that vampire Wagner be !»cried an indignant Hermes as soon as the transport took off and the controls were switched to automatic.

"Well, the German base is their territory, so I can understand why they're making a fuss about it. But wherever we go away from the base is up to us!»"Well, don't get so upset. Even setting aside prejudice, it's an undeniable fact that we are a nuisance to them."

Zead responded in a soothing tone.

## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

But even so, I found Wagner's attitude unpleasant and puzzling. Though he acted as if to tell them to just get out and not conduct their own investigation, the moment Hermes asked for permission to take off, he came on the air traffic controller's behalf and asked Durandal detailed questions, almost as if he was interrogating him, about whether he was going to stop his investigation, and if not, where he was going and what he was going to do.

"Currently, we are putting all our efforts into investigating and analyzing the attacked base, but we do not believe that this alone will be enough to grasp the full picture of the attack. It is highly likely that we will need to conduct further detailed investigations in various areas in the future, but when that happens, we would be in trouble if you make any careless contact beforehand and evidence and traces disappear."

When Gide protested, asking why he had to be asked such a question, Wagner responded calmly, as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

"Unfortunately, I don't have the authority to stop you from doing whatever you want outside of this base, calling it your own investigation. So at the very least, I intend to confirm where you plan to do what you plan to do, and if possible, contact the relevant parties, and request that you ensure that evidence is preserved.»"In that case, I will send you a list of the areas we plan to investigate, so you can do as you wish. However, our investigation extends beyond Germany, so I don't know if your request will be accepted,»said Zead, hanging up the phone and sending the list. Soon after, we were given permission to take off, and we

We quickly left the German military base behind.

«Will Wagner really contact the people involved?»

When I suddenly noticed someone looking at me, Zead picked up on it with keen ears and turned to look my way.

"Are you worried about someone interfering with your investigation?"

"Yes, even though Vagner doesn't have direct authority over him, if, for example, the base commander at Kiel were to ask us to sabotage Durandal, it could become a troublesome situation,»I replied, and Zead nodded slightly.

"I understand your concerns. But I doubt there will be any noticeable disruption. Even if **we** were to be investigated by the orders of the E.C. Summit, I doubt there would be many people who would be as forceful as Wagner.

In addition, although this is not unique to the German military, the army and navy have traditionally not been on good terms.

"No. Moreover, because their commander, Glaser, is quite forceful, the Special Task Force is somewhat isolated even within the German Army, who are supposed to be their allies. If a request came from that unpopular person to the naval base to interfere with the investigation of Durandal, it would be more likely than not that they would cooperate out of spite.»"So that works to our advantage."

Hermes interjected, grinning.

But Zead didn't laugh, instead he glared thoughtfully.

## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

"Even Wagner should be well aware of the fact that Blauer Nebel is isolated within the German army. Why did he say something like that?»" I wonder if that was just an empty threat. I think it's often the case that the people who act arrogant and say things like, 'I don't make empty threats,' are actually just lip service,»Hermes replied lightly, but Zead remained dissatisfied and thought deeply.

Eventually, the transport plane reached the airspace near Kiel Base. Zead contacted the base and said he wanted coastline surveillance records as research material. Although he wasn't particularly happy, the data was sent back without any problems.

"It was just an empty threat after all."

the data that had been sent, Hermes declared,»I'm willing to bet that Vagner hasn't contacted Kiel Base at all."

Zead responded, still not convinced. I too couldn't connect my impression of Wagner with the empty threat, and I started to think about it.

«Wagner said that he would contact the relevant parties if possible. But if by relevant parties he means Kiel and other German military units, then regardless of whether the request was granted, it is not impossible to make contact. Who exactly does he have in mind?"

perhaps Wagner, like Zead, had his own network of contacts, and that apart from the military chain of command, there were people in various parts of the military who could be expected to cooperate. If that was the case, no matter how much people disliked Glaser and Blauer Nebel, there was a possibility that someone would unexpectedly side with Wagner and trip us up. Fortunately, there didn't seem to be anyone like that at the Kiel base.

But at that moment, Hermes, who had been checking the data, suddenly shouted, interrupting my thoughts.

"Zead, Elsa, look at this!"

"what up?"

Zead asked, peering at the monitor, and Hermes quickly explained, »If you look closely at the surveillance situation on the western coast of the Danish Jutland Peninsula, you can see that there's a huge hole! This place is within the surveillance area of The Hague Base, and I'm sure the Danish military is patrolling there too, but even so, this is really lax! » "Yes, it's true, compared to the coasts of German territory, the surveillance network is quite sparse, » Zead groaned, looking at the data Hermes had pointed out.

"Moreover, even if any abnormality was found, the Kiel base only contacted the Hague base and the Danish Navy, and did not carry out any follow-up checks at all.



## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

I'm sure there must have been some reason behind it, but for anyone plotting an incursion, this would definitely be an attractive target."

"Besides, unlike important secrets or information that can only be known by going to the scene, this big gap can be easily deduced from general information ! Whether it's the E.C. Navy or the German Navy, either way, this is a big idiot !»Hermes yelled in an astonished tone. Zead quickly responded.

"Let's go there right away.

It's not been determined for sure that the people who attacked the German base landed here, but it's quite possible."

«OK !"

Hermes took to the controls, and the transport plane quickly flew off towards Jutland.»How's it going? Any signs of operational van tours or large trailers?»Hermes asked impatiently, as they flew the plane low and slow, close to the limits of E.C.'s aviation regulations.

Of course, if either Zead, who was glaring at the monitor, or I, had any reaction, I'm sure they would have said something immediately, so there would have been no reaction if we remained silent, but as pilots, we had to ask.

Apparently it's not possible.

And Zead dutifully replies.

There's been no response to the Van Tour. It's hard to say anything about trailers, because they're indistinguishable from factories when they're parked, but we haven't seen any moving around.»"That's right. We haven't found any vehicles on the road right now that are big enough and powerful enough to carry a Van Tour.»

As I continued, Hermes made an exasperated noise.

"Hmm, maybe I was mistaken after all?"

"It's still too early to make that conclusion. Even if they landed around here, it's possible that the Wanzers that headed to Germany haven't returned yet."

Zead responded, staring at the monitor.

"It's possible that they've already withdrawn, but it seems like they're running out of time. No matter how lax the navy's surveillance is, bringing a submarine up to the shore in the middle of the day, loading the Wanzers off the trailer, and making their escape would be way too conspicuous. If a private plane or something happened to be passing nearby, they'd be in full view."

would it be best for us to come and investigate later at night?"

## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

In response to Hermes' question, Zead nodded with a straight face. would be to find some traces during the day and pinpoint the landing site. Then, with the cooperation of Kiel Base and the Danish military, we'd like to set up a thorough encirclement by sea, land and air, and then lie in wait for the enemy to arrive at night.

this a very .....good snack?"

"Any reaction?"

Hermes asked enthusiastically, to which Zead responded calmly.

"At the northern edge of the detection area, along the coast, there was a signal that seemed to be from an operational Wanzer. However, it wasn't a very strong signal. It might be a small work craft."

"Oh? So it's a civilian plane?"

Hermes uttered a cry of disappointment, but Zead's expression hardened and he shook his head.

among the normal Wanzerlists used by E.C., both civilian and military, there are no units that match this reaction. It's an unidentified unit."

Custom Machine

«Hmm, it's possible that it's a modified machine made by some enthusiast. Anyway, let's try approaching it and making contact."

As she said this, Hermes sent the transport plane north. At the same time, a new bright spot appeared on the monitor.

did.

"Ah, there's another reaction. And one more , so far three have been confirmed."

"The strength of the reaction is similar for all three units."

At the very least, it doesn't seem to be equipped with surface-to-air missiles mounted on Vantours, Zead whispered. If they were to be targeted with such things, transport planes would be no match for them.

"I tried calling out on both civilian and military frequencies, but no response. I think I'll try using a megaphone when we get a little closer ....."

Suddenly, Hermes let out a shriek and the transport plane rocketed upwards.»Oh no! They just started firing their machine guns!"

"What about the damage?"

Zead asked without a moment's hesitation, and Hermes looked at the instruments and immediately replied,»We managed to avoid it! We may have been hit a little, but all functions are normal!»"Okay, let's contact the Danish military. There's no need to go down and take the risk,»Zead calmly instructed, staring at the monitor at the small Venturers that were firing continuously from the ground. However, Hermes answered in a panicked tone.

"No good, I can't communicate with the Danish military! It seems they're jamming!"

"What did you say?"

## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

Zead's expression suddenly became grim.

"Elsa, can you sense where the jamming signal is coming from?"

"Yes, I'll try."

The short answer is, I operate the machine.

"We were able to detect it. The source is located ten kilometers offshore, in the ocean. There is no ship-like object to be seen, so we think it's probably a submarine that's surfaced just above the water's surface.»"I see. So if we escape, they'll approach the shore, pick up the Vantour, and retreat,»Zead growled, frowning.

"Either way, even if we notify the Danish military or the Kiel base now, it will be virtually impossible to capture the submarine.

In that case, we should at least secure the Wanzer."

"Are you going to land a transport plane where they're shooting at you?"

Hermes' voice was a little shaky, but Zead responded calmly.

"No, we don't need to land a transport plane within gun range; we can just airdrop a Wanzer and it should work out.

Can you do it, Elsa?"

"yes"

When asked, I answered immediately and without hesitation.

During my time in the French army, I had done airborne parachute training several times, jumping off a transport plane in a Wanzer. This was my first time to jump into a situation where the enemy was firing at me, but it was extremely difficult to aim at a falling target and fire from the ground. It was not easy to hit a target unless there were a large number of enemies in formation laying down a barrage of bullets. It was okay, I could do it.

I thought I was sure of that, but it seemed that my face was quite twitching. When Zead saw my face, he looked worried and asked again. "Well, this was your first time in real combat. Are you okay?" "Don't worry, I can do it."

I said as firmly as possible. Zead's expression tightened as he nodded.»Very well, then please board the Wanzer and prepare for an airborne drop.

I'll be there too. Hermes, I'll leave the controls to you."

Without further ado, Zead stormed out of the cockpit and headed for the hangar, and I followed after him.

"Elsa, should I go first?"

the Wanzer check was over and it was time to descend, Zead called out to me. I think he was concerned about me as it was my first battle, but Zead's unit had missiles mounted on both shoulders.

## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

a support-type Wild Goat equipped with a knuckle melee weapon, but no matter how you look at it, it wasn't the type to charge headfirst into the enemy.

"No, I'll go down first and put pressure on the enemy. I'd appreciate it if you could provide some support."

"I see. Don't push yourself."

With Zead's voice in my ears, I head towards the end of the hangar, the airborne landing area, in my vantage point. The mech I'm piloting is a Zenith that's been specially tuned with Durandal, just like yesterday, but the bullets loaded into the weapons in both of my hands aren't training rounds, they're real ammunition.

«Cargo bay, all green. Airborne drop, preparations underway."

Hermes' voice rang out, the tension in her voice evident, the door at the rear of the transport plane opened. Up until this point, it was no different from the previous training, but the problem was that from the ground, machine gun fire was being fired, accompanied by a loud noise.

"Countdown, five, four, three, two, one, descend!"

At Hermes' signal, I launched the Wanzer into the air. From the ground, small Wanzers armed with machine guns began to attack violently, but for some reason, I didn't feel like they would be able to hit us.

"In fact, the real battle begins after we land!"

I prepared my Wanzer for attack in the air, I was dazzled. Apparently some of the more experienced Wanzer pilots from the U.S.N. and U.C.U. launch attacks while descending, but I had no intention of going that far.

If the force of the shot caused him to lose his balance and he landed poorly, it would all be for nothing.

The Venture landed with a heavy thud. If this was training, they would check to see if the impact of the descent had caused any abnormalities in its functions, but now was not the time to take such leisurely steps. Right in front of me was an enemy aiming its machine gun at me.

"Go Ettsu!"

With barely any aim, I fired the machine gun and shotgun that were in both hands of the Wanzer at the same time. The machine gun missed its target, but the shotgun hit it directly from close range, and the small and lightweight enemy Wanzer was literally blown away and slammed into the ground.

Normally, after receiving this much damage, the escape mechanism would automatically activate and the pilot would be ejected from the Wanzer, but this enemy was different. The enemy Wanzer was slammed into the ground, and in an instant, flames erupted from its entire body, before exploding spectacularly into pieces. I don't know what had happened to the enemy pilot after my attack, but there was no way he could be saved.

"Shoes!"

It's not that I hadn't expected this to happen, but seeing it self-destruct right in front of me was still quite a shock. Unfortunately, my evasive action was too late, and my plane was hit squarely by the blast.



## Mission 2 Elsa's First Battle

the second enemy plane quickly charged in, firing wildly at me, seemingly unconcerned about my comrade's suicide. I fought back with my own machine gun, trying my best to avoid it, but perhaps my aim was poor, and I couldn't hit it. Then the third enemy plane attacked from the side.

«Well !»

I was getting caught in a pincer attack, I gritted my teeth. The enemy was a lightweight, small Venturer, but the weapon it was equipped with was the same machine gun as the one used in combat. If I was hit by concentrated fire from two planes at once, I definitely wouldn't be able to escape unscathed.

But in the next moment, the enemy to my side caused a big explosion and was blown away. For a moment, I thought it had committed suicide, but it seemed that Zead, who had descended after me, had fired a missile and made a direct hit on the enemy Van Tour.

"...::amazing"

I had seen Wanzers fire missiles many times in the past, and even participated in mock battles with missile-equipped units, but to be honest, I had never really realized that missiles used in real combat had such lethal power in one hit.

And the last remaining enemy must have realized that this was bad. He tried to close the gap and block the missiles, running towards Zead's machine. However, in doing so, he ended up with his back to my machine.

It will be aimed at.

"I won't let you do that!"

As I sprinted forward with the Wanzer, I aimed the shotgun at the enemy's legs, which were facing away from me. Just as I had expected, the weak legs of the lightweight, small Wanzer were rendered inoperable with a single hit, and the enemy came to a halt as it leaned forward.

However, the enemy plane still tried to turn around and point its machine gun at me, but I got close enough to it that I aimed my shotgun at the plane's chest.

"Drop your weapons and surrender!"

Using the external loudspeaker, I announced, »If, if, they surrender now...» However, my wish was in vain, and before I had even finished advising them to surrender, flames erupted from the entire body of the enemy plane. And at the same time that I jumped down from the vantage point, the last remaining enemy plane self-destructed and was blown to pieces.

«...-1 : I guess it's impossible to capture it alive after all. How troublesome ::» I sighed heavily, looking at the remains of the enemy VanTour, black smoke rising from its tail.





# MISSION 3

Suspicion

"Made by Zaftra?"

As I looked at her with wide eyes, Hermes nodded with a difficult look on her face.

"Yeah. After all, it's just the result of analysing the chips that barely survived the charring amidst the charred wreckage. I can't say it's 100 % accurate from an objective standpoint, but my hunch is that it's almost certain.»"So, does that mean it was the Zaftra army that attacked the German base?»I asked bluntly, to which Hermes shrugged in response.»I can't say that for sure. There are other armies besides the Zaftra army that use Zaftra -made Wanzers, after all."

PMO»That's true. In particular, the lightweight, small, work-purpose Wanzers made by Zaftra were sent in large numbers to countries around the world during the time the Constant Peacekeeping Organization was active, and they are still in common use today. But on the other hand, if it's a common model, it would also be on E.C.'s Wanzer list, so there's no way it could be an unidentified machine,»Zead groaned with a thoughtful look on his face, half talking to himself.

"Also, the only ones using Zaftra-made Venturers in the military are Zaftra's satellite countries and Zaftra's

### Mission 3 Suspicion

Most of them are small countries that receive aid from Zaftra. It's far too absurd for the military of such countries to invade E.C. and destroy a German military base.» "Does that mean the Zaftra army is the culprit after all?" I asked, and Zead answered cautiously.

"It's also possible that it was a camouflage to make it look like that. Zaftra -made lightweight, small-sized Wanzers are not that hard to obtain. It would be easy to modify it appropriately to turn it into an unidentified unit.»

analyze the combat van tour that was the main force of the assault force, even if it's just the remains the German army has. I think we might be able to clarify a lot of things by comparing it with the data from smaller aircraft,» Hermes pleaded, sounding quite reluctant.

"If the Germans want it, we can give them the remains of a small plane, or a body. Is there anything we can do?"

"After all, the other party is Blauer Nebel. I don't know what will happen, but I'll give it a go,» Zead said, continuing with a difficult look on his face.

"The bigger issue is where the enemy's main forces are and what they're doing. Common sense would suggest they're hiding out in Germany."

"Will the fact that their retreat route has been cut off reach the troops in hiding?» I ask, and Zead nods thoughtfully.

"Yes, a submarine escaped. It's probably reasonable to assume that the message got through,» he said. After we destroyed the three VanTours, the submarine that had been jamming communications from just above the surface of the sea just disappeared. Of course, as soon as communication was restored, Hermes notified the Danish military and the Kiel base, and a large-scale anti-submarine search was immediately launched from the sea and air, but so far I have not heard of any success.» In any case, under the current circumstances, it should now be virtually impossible for the enemy's main force to secretly escape from E.C. territory.

However, if they forced their way through, even if they managed to escape, it would be immediately obvious where their troops came from.

If I were the commander, what would I do? I would dispose of the conspicuous van tours and somehow get only the necessary personnel to escape."

«Well, Zead would probably do that, but I get the feeling that this enemy doesn't have much respect for human life.

If anything, now that they can't escape, wouldn't they take the easy way out and go on another rampage, resulting in a spectacular suicide and annihilation?"



### Mission 3 Suspicion

Hermes said with a frown, and Zead responded with a bitter expression. "That's true. It's a very troublesome situation, but it's quite likely. If that's the case, we'll have to predict where they're planning to cause another disturbance and come up with a countermeasure.»"But first of all, why on earth did Pa and his comrades go to the trouble of invading E.C.?» Suddenly, I realized the fundamental question and glared at him as I spoke out loud.

Hermes responded with a puzzled look.

"What for? To destroy a German base, of course?"

"But destroying a German military base wouldn't gain anyone. If some country were to declare war on Germany and launch a large-scale invasion, it would make sense to send a special forces unit ahead to launch a surprise attack on the defense base, but that's not the situation we're in right now, is it?» When I pointed this out, both Hermes and Zead looked even more serious as they pondered.» That's certainly true, but the fact is that the German military base has been destroyed.

If this isn't a prelude to a larger scale invasion, then it could be a terrorist attack with political motives, or a test launch of a new weapon like the Sakata Industries incident. Those are the only motives I can think of, but both seem pretty far-fetched."

terrorist attack, the only possible purpose would be to damage Germany's prestige.

about the U.S.N., but I'm not so sure about Germany or E.C., which are not that great.

I can't imagine there is any country or group that is willing to go to such lengths to cause harm.

"But if they're testing a new weapon, self-destructing would be out of the question. No matter how you look at it, this invasion force is operating on the assumption that they will lose some of their strength,»Hermes said, shaking her head in annoyance.

"As I thought, there's still not enough data ! I can't even make a single proper inference!" "Well, even so, I should still consider it a blessing that I was able to come into direct contact with a part of the enemy.

"If we try to move any further, it will be difficult to achieve any new results,»he said, half as if he was convincing himself, making Zead dazzle. »I think we should go to Paris for now and submit an interim report to the E.C. Congress.»"I understand. If that's what you decide, let's move to Paris.»Hermes nodded and headed for the controls, but then suddenly, as if she had just realized something, she said, »I've gathered most of the data necessary to write the report. If you need more detailed data, just let me know and I'll provide it right away."

"Sorry."

Zead smiled and stood up, presumably to write up his report in another room. Then Hermes called out to me.

### Mission 3 Suspicion

"Elsa, I think you should get some rest while you can. I'll fly the transport to Paris and then I'll get some sleep without showing up at the E.C. Congress.»

"Eh, but ..."

When I hesitated, Zead, who was about to leave the cockpit, turned around and said,»That's right. No matter what happens from now on, it's best to rest while you can. Please use bunk room A.»

"got it"

I didn't feel that tired, but it was certainly an ironclad rule for a soldier to take some rest whenever possible. I bowed, stood up, and followed Zead out of the cockpit.

When I came to, I was in a Wanzer.

I looked and saw a French military van on the other side. However, the image on the monitor showed it as an enemy plane, and it was shooting at my van.

Ah, it's a mock battle, I thought to myself, as I easily avoided the attacks of the French Ventours. Perhaps because I was used to the quick reactions of the Durandal Ventours, the enemy's movements seemed to be in slow motion. I quickly closed the distance and fired my shotgun. However, the shotgun I fired was not a training round, but a live round. Moreover, the shotgun's

After receiving the blow, the French Wanzer suddenly erupted in flames from its entire body, and in the next moment, it self-destructed and was blown to pieces.

"No way, that's not true, why?"

, a cold, male voice - perhaps Glaser or Wagner - spoke in my ear, sounding condemning.

"You killed him."

"That's not what I meant."

He tried to explain himself, but the words didn't come out properly. And the man's voice spoke coldly again.»Elsa Eliane. You killed her. That's the only fact."

"It's not cleaning!"

"I didn't shoot a French van tourer,»I shouted.»I fought and destroyed an unidentified van tourer that had attacked a German military base.»And I only destroyed the van tourer, I didn't kill the pilot. The van tourer killed itself by blowing itself up.»But you shot. The enemy is dead. No matter who you kill, no matter how you kill him, you killed him."

"different!"

As I cried out, the man's corpse spoke to me in a cold, but persistent tone.

### Mission 3 Suspicion

"What's the difference? What's the difference? You're a murderer. Am I not?"

"different!"

I woke up the moment I screamed at the top of my lungs.

It took me a moment to realise that I was in the Durandal transport plane's sleeping quarters.

« Nice dream"

Feeling dizzy, I sighed and wiped the sweat from my forehead with my hand.

However, even though it was a bad dream, I can't forget that it was just a dream. Today, for the first time in my life, I shot a live ammunition at a van tour with people inside, and as a result, at least two people lost their lives. This is an undeniable fact.

"A soldier's job is to kill the enemy. What's the big deal now ?"

Even though I was dazzled, my spirits did not improve. Come to think of it, it was rather ironic that as soon as I transferred from the regular military to a non-military organization, I ended up experiencing actual combat and killing the enemy. I looked at the clock and saw that there was still a long way to go until my scheduled arrival time in Paris.

However, not wanting to go back to sleep, I got up from the cot in the sleeping quarters. I washed my face in the sink, quickly fixed my face and hair, and left the sleeping quarters when Gide, who was drinking tea at a nearby table, spotted me and called out to me.

"Did you get some rest?"

"Yeah, well."

Answering vaguely, I found an empty seat near Zead and sat down.»Is the report finished yet?"

"Ah, that's already done. It's still just an interim report, and for the most part, we'll be able to connect the data that Hermes has prepared for us."

Saying that, Zead looked at me intently.»Hmm? You look depressed. Did you have a bad dream?»"Yes, I suppose so."

I replied with a wry smile. Zead had been a member of the British Special Forces for many years, and had gained such harsh combat experience that he was nicknamed the Grim Reaper. From his perspective, I was no more than a fledgling bird, having just been in combat for the first time, having shot an enemy for the first time, and now suffering from nightmares. However, Zead suddenly spoke with a sincere tone, and I was dazzled.

"Firing a missile at a van tour with humans on board is still an unpleasant experience, no matter how many times you do it. Well, once it stops being unpleasant, I think it'll be genuinely dangerous.»« Do you really feel that way?»I asked timidly, and Zead nodded deeply. "Yes. The missiles are far too powerful. Even if you try to capture the enemy without destroying them,

### Mission 3 Suspicion

"They can't even go easy on you. If they hit a small van, helicopter, or tank directly, they can kill the pilot without giving him time to activate his escape route,»Zead added bitterly.

"However, the Wanzers used by our enemy this time are equipped with self-destruct mechanisms and no escape mechanisms, making them incredible devices. It doesn't really matter how the missile hits.»"Have you been piloting missile-equipped aircraft for a long time?"

In response to my question, Jaid shook his head.

"No, it wasn't that long ago that I started using missile-equipped aircraft. At that time, the wazer manufacturers contracted by the British military didn't have any missile-equipped aircraft capable of withstanding airborne drops, which are essential for special forces. So I flew relatively light wanzers equipped with melee weapons and a shotgun.

However, this aircraft often suffered casualties due to a lack of firepower, so when missile- equipped aircraft capable of airborne landings appeared, I persuaded my superiors to introduce them to the special forces. However, I was told to take responsibility for recommending their introduction, and I was forced to ride in a missile-equipped aircraft. After that, the unit's casualties visibly decreased, but even my own comrades began to openly call me the Grim Reaper. It's true that an attack that unilaterally fires powerful missiles from a long distance gives the impression of being ruthless and unquestioning, even to the allies being supported. Of course, the introduction of missile-equipped aircraft

I don't regret proposing the move at all, but it may not have been good for my mental health."

"Oh, is that so?"

Now that I was convinced, Zead told me with a serious expression.

"Elsa. I believe that your action of shooting the enemy Wanzer's legs to stop it from moving and urging it to surrender was the right thing to do, both as a soldier and as a human being.

However, Durandal has even fewer members than the special forces. If they were to encounter the enemy's main force and engage in a frontal battle, they would be forced into a battle at an overwhelming disadvantage.

If I were to find myself in that situation, I would not hesitate to fire my missiles. I want you to act with your own survival as your number one priority.

Durandal is not a military force. There are no operational objectives that take priority over the lives of our members. Please always remember that.」

"yes"

I nodded deeply, realizing that in her eyes I was nothing more than a fledgling.

«Zead !-



### Mission 3 Suspicion

Zead and I entered the E.C. Council Secretariat office, a woman in a suit with dark chestnut hair called out to us.

"Cecil? What brings you here? Weren't you in London?"

Zead asked in surprise, and the woman called Cecil replied in a clear tone.

"The German military base attack incident was starting to look a bit fishy. I came to Paris because I felt I would be caught off guard if I stayed in London. I also wanted to talk to you face-to-face, since you're the one investigating the incident.»

"Really"

Jed nodded and looked at me.

"This is Cecil Allison, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for the British Ministry of State, an old acquaintance of mine. This is Elsa Eliane, a new member of Durandal, and an excellent Wanzer pilot."

"Nice to meet you, Elsa."

Undersecretary Allison smiled and held out her hand. I was a little nervous, but I shook it. After all, the Eliane family had been remarkably untouched by people in professions such as politicians or high-ranking bureaucrats for generations.

«you're welcome"

When I shook her hand, I found that the Vice Minister's hands were unexpectedly large for a woman, and strong and powerful. Well, as an old friend of Zead's, there was no way she could be the kind of ignorant, big-headed bureaucrat whose only thought was profit-mongering politicians that my grandfather and father always criticized.

"So, what exactly is this suspicious development?"

When Zead asked, Deputy Director Allison put her hand in front of her as if to stop him. »I can't tell you here. There is some information I don't really want people to hear. I've set aside a confidential chat room, so let's talk there."

"Okay. Anyway, I'll submit my interim report."

With that, Zead headed to the office of the Diet Secretariat, and I hurriedly followed him. The procedure for submitting the report was very simple, and we entered the confidential meeting room with Deputy Secretary Allison.

"Well then, let's start by talking about the progress of our investigation."

After closing the door, which is made of a special material that blocks sound and radio waves, and switching on the anti-eavesdropping device, Zead sits down in a chair and begins to speak.

Deputy Secretary Allison listened to Jido's explanation in silence, but when he finished, his expression lit up with a serious look on his face.

«The Wanzers in Denmark were Zaftra -made. Of course, that alone can't be used to prove with certainty that it was Zaftra forces that attacked the German base."

### Mission 3 Suspicion

•»Of course that's true. Special forces who infiltrate other countries to carry out covert operations often go out of their way to avoid using domestically produced equipment."

When Zead responded, Deputy Secretary Allison looked even more unconvinced and asked,»And that's common knowledge to Brigadier General Glaser, isn't it?»"Yeah, he's been in the Special Forces for a long time,»Zead said, frowning.

«What's the matter, Glaser?"

"Right around the time you discovered the suspicious Wanzer on the coast of Denmark, Brigadier General Glaser mobilized a unit from the Blauer Nebel to capture a base raiding force hiding out in Germany.

However, judging from the size of the captured force, it appears to have been one of several small groups scattered and hiding out.»

Zead looked a little surprised at Undersecretary Allison's response.»Oh, that's impressive. When we left the base, there was no sign of Blauer Nebel moving at all."

"Apparently it was a covert blitzkrieg operation that made full use of their mobility, something they are good at. Well, that's fine."

Deputy Director Allison said in a tone that clearly indicated she was displeased.

"The Wanzer group that was captured by the Blauer Nebel put up a fierce resistance, but all of them self-destructed and were reduced to wreckage. After analyzing the wreckage, the Blauer Nebel officially reported to the German Chancellor in the name of Brigadier General Glaser, head of the emergency investigation headquarters, that it was a new type of Wanzer made by the USN, and that it was highly likely that the people who attacked the German base were a USN special forces unit."

"What did you say?"

Zead's eyes widen in shock.

Did that old fox Glaser issue such a simplistic and hasty report under his own name? Honestly, I find it hard to believe."

"But it's true."

Deputy Secretary Allison stated firmly.

"The current German Chancellor is not originally a person with knowledge of military affairs, but he has completely accepted Brigadier General Glaser's report. At the summit, he is raging that a protest must be made not only to Germany but also to the U.S.N. in the name of the E.C.

The British Prime Minister responded by saying that it was possible for non-U.S.N. military forces to use U.S.N. - made Wanzers, and that more caution should be exercised in the matter, and somehow managed to thwart the protest in E.C.'s name.»

### Mission 3 Suspicion

"But there's no stopping Germany from protesting on its own,»growled Zead, and Undersecretary Allison nodded approvingly.»That's right.

Moreover, it seemed as if the U.S.N. had been waiting for Germany's protest, and the U.S.

They are howling that this is an unforgivable insult to our country. It's become a real headache."

"But attacks on the Iberia Megafloat and the E.C. Allied Naval Base at The Hague would be understandable. What advantage would the U.S.N. have in attacking a German inland base?"

Zead shook his head, looking confused.

"Well, if you say that, even if the attackers were not the U.S.N., I have no idea who would destroy a German base, or for what purpose."

"That's right."

Deputy Secretary Allison nodded and seemed a little hesitant, but then bowed low and began to speak.

"This is just between you and me, but there are several people among the leaders of E.C. who believe that this incident was staged by Germany."

"A self-inflicted act?"

Both Zead and I were stunned and looked at Deputy Secretary Allison.»Five bases were destroyed, and over a thousand people were killed. This incident was staged, you say?

"The only evidence that the base was truly destroyed and that there were that many casualties is the Browne Ibell investigation records. Even if you tried to investigate on your own, you were effectively refused, weren't you?

If you want to fabricate something on a national level, there's nothing you can't do."

When I asked her question, Deputy Minister Allison replied with a serious look on her face.

"The current German government does not have a high approval rating among the people. It is said that if the next election goes ahead as things stand, there is a high possibility of a change of government. And it is common knowledge among those involved in politics that one way for the current government to win an election is to forcibly create a crisis for the country and make the people believe that a national unity is necessary.»

"I see"

Zead groaned with a complicated expression.

"It's true that it may be a fraud on the national level, and it's hard to deny that it's not. But would the German military cooperate with such a fraud? If the military didn't cooperate fully, it would be impossible.

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This scam won't work either."

"I won't say it's impossible that the entire German military would cooperate with the government and commit fraud, but it's not that likely. But if it's just Brigadier General Glaser and Blauer Nebel, it wouldn't be surprising if they cooperated with the current government and committed fraud."

With that, Deputy Minister Allison shook her head slightly.

"It may seem odd for me to say this to you, Zead, but in any military, special forces involved in security-related matters are treated as behind-the-scenes by the combat forces, and even if they become commanders, they generally only reach the rank of colonel. There are very few cases of them progressing to the rank of general.

On the other hand, military personnel involved in security-related matters have connections with politicians and bureaucrats. Glaser seems to have had long-standing connections with the current German chancellor and other government officials, and since they came to power, his opportunities to appear in public have increased dramatically. I think his promotion to brigadier general was probably due to his close relationship with the chancellor."

"So if there's a change of administration, Glaser will go back to being a loser?»Zead asked with a wry smile. Deputy Secretary Allison nodded seriously.

"That's right. He probably won't be demoted to colonel, but on the contrary, he'll probably be forced to retire since he's already a general and has achieved great success. Of course, the commander of the Blauer Nebel will probably be replaced by someone else, and in some cases, the Blauer Nebel may be disbanded and reorganized.

"It's possible that it will happen."

"For Glaser, that would be even more unbearable than being demoted,»he said in a sympathetic tone, making Zead's eyes light up. However, he quickly tightened his expression and continued.»However, if Glaser and Blauer Nebel were the only ones in the German army who were involved in the fraud, then the attack on the base actually took place. Even if we set aside the moral issues for now, Blauer Nebel does not have the military strength to destroy five bases at the same time. Although they are an elite unit, they do not have enough numbers.

"Then there is the Venturers and the submarines we encountered in Denmark. Even if the German government and the Glaser were working together to commit some kind of fraud, I think it's highly likely that a foreign military is also involved."

there is no benefit to foreign troops in destroying German bases and inciting a crisis, right?"

In response to Deputy Secretary Allison's remark, Zead responded with a stern expression.

"Not really. If the destruction of the base is in Germany's interest, then it could be used as a bargaining chip to attract foreign troops. For example, they could make a secret deal with the U.S.N. and deliberately issue a protest statement to stir up tensions. Suppose the U.S.N. wanted to start a war with the E.C. and was looking for a pretext to do so.



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If so, it's not an impossible story."

New Continent Hawk

"Well, I think the hardliners in the U.S.S. are always looking to invade Madeira, if they could find a reason."

Deputy Allison groaned, frowning.

"But Zead, even if they won the election, do you think the German government is crazy enough to start a war between the U.S.N. and the E.C.?»

"That's something I'd rather ask, Cecil. If you ask me, the fact that this incident may have been staged is already enough to make me think that it's a madcap story."

Saying this, Zead turns both his palms up.

"Well, even so, just five years ago an incredibly crazy incident occurred in which a war that had caused so many casualties, not just among soldiers but among ordinary civilians as well, was in fact being carried out in order to test new weapons, with an agreement between the warring parties that even included an arbitrator. No matter how crazy the intentions behind the attack on the German military base, I wouldn't be that surprised."

«..That's true."

With a heavy sigh, Deputy Secretary Allison nodded.

"But even if it was just Germany that lost its mind, if war broke out between the U.S. and Germany,

the E.C. countries will be drawn into it. We must do whatever it takes to prevent that from happening.»"That's true. But no matter how much the E.C. side doesn't want to fight, if the U.S.N. attacks, war will inevitably break out,»Zead pointed out bitterly.

no matter how war - loving the U.S.N. military is, I don't think they'd go head-on against the E.C. Navy, which has a powerful offshore military base like the Iberia Megafloat.»«Yes, I hope that's the case,»Zead said, changing his tone a bit as he spoke to Undersecretary Allison, who was glaring at him with a prayerful look on her face.

"In any case, how we respond to the U.S.N. is something that we have no choice but to leave to you guys in charge of E.C. diplomacy. For us, the attackers of the German base have now been cut off from their escape route, so it is our urgent task to predict what they will do next and where, and come up with a countermeasure.»"That's right.

If this incident was staged by Germany, then there is a possibility that Blauer Nebel will be able to investigate the matter and bring it to a close. But if a foreign military is involved, it probably won't be that simple.»Deputy Secretary Allison nodded and looked at Zead.

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"What do you predict?"

"There's not enough data to make a prediction. Moreover, you've just told me about the possibility that Germany staged the attack, something I'd never even considered. I can't do anything until I've had some time to reconsider,»Zead said, looking thoughtful as he continued.

"However, I feel there won't be another attack on a military base like the German base. After this incident, military bases not only in Germany but all across E.C. are on the highest level of alert. Deliberately attacking such a base would be an incredibly foolish plan.

However, if whoever sent the assault force to the German base intends to waste away this force without any thought for its return or preservation, it's possible that they might dare to resort to such a foolish plan.»"I heard that the assault force's Wanzers were pre -loaded with explosives so that if they were to fail, they would not be captured and would self-destruct along with their crew. Is that true?"

In response to Deputy Secretary Allison's question, Zead immediately nodded.

"That's right. When we fought the Wanzer in Denmark, it committed suicide rather than surrender after being stopped. We should think of this enemy as one against which our common sense doesn't apply."

「It seems so.

To be honest, I don't think the raiding forces and the damage to the base were fabricated by the German government and military.

I had suspected that, but it turns out I was wrong.

afoot within E.C. territory that can't be contained by such political maneuvering. I have a bad feeling that if we don't take the right countermeasures, there will be even greater casualties.»"Your premonitions are often right. Especially the bad ones,»Zead said in a very serious tone.

"So the State Department's doomsday prophet is alive and well?"

"Fortunately, the British Prime Minister is willing to listen to Cassandra's premonitions of disaster. Of course, he won't accept them unless he can provide some solid evidence for them.»As Deputy Secretary Allison responded in all seriousness, Zead nodded deeply.»I see.

It's my and Durandal's job to show that evidence."

"That's right. It would be much appreciated if you could give us a prediction as soon as possible. Of course, I'll make sure that genius boy provides us with all the necessary data."

At Deputy Director Allison's order, Zead's brows darkened slightly.

"I appreciate that you say that, but you know who Hermes is. I trust him, but with things going badly with the U.S.N., some people are going to have a problem with that.

### Mission 3 Suspicion

Una."

It is the official position of the E.C. Council that his credibility issue was settled the moment he was allowed to join Durandal, unless any new suspicious factors emerge. If you, as the leader, trust him, then there is no problem. We will just have to let those who want to say something say it,» Deputy Minister Allison stated in a firm tone.

So I asked timidly.

"Um, is there anything else that's wrong with Hermes' identity other than the fact that he's from the U.S.N.»

"Well, it's a private matter. Besides, depending on the circumstances, just being from the U.S.N. could be enough of a problem.»

As Zead growled unsteadily with a slightly troubled look on his face, Deputy Director Allison looked back and forth between him and me before speaking.

"May I tell you this much? His family name is Sturges."

New Continent

«Sturgess, are you sure, the U.S. Secretary of State?» I asked, wide-eyed, and Zead nodded gravely.

"He's my nephew."

«.....Is that so»:

GAME NOVELS Front Mission 4 I was surprised that a senior member of the EC Ground New Tactical Research Institute was from the U.S.S.N., but I never imagined he was the nephew of the Secretary of State. I was stunned. Then, Zead said with a complicated expression.

"As you may have heard, Hermes is critical of the U.S.N.'s expansionist hegemonic policy, and he did not want to have any ties with the government or military, which is why he came to E.C. Secretary of State Sturgess is said to represent the moderates within President Cliff's current administration, but Hermes nevertheless rarely wants to mention that his father is a high- ranking U.S.N. government official, and he rarely uses the surname Sturgess.

You too, please keep that in mind."

"yes"

I immediately nodded. As long as Zead trusted and respected Hermes, I had no objections.

However, no matter how hard Zead tried to protect her, if the relationship between the E.C. and the U.S.N. deteriorated to the point of direct war, Hermes' position would inevitably become precarious. At worst, she could be deported to the U.S.N., or monitored by security authorities, or even placed under house arrest. Zead then tightened his expression and told Deputy Secretary Allison.

"Well then, we will return to HQ for now. We will look at the remains of the Wanzer we obtained in Denmark.

### Mission 3 Suspicion

We need to use the equipment at HQ to analyze it in more detail. Then, we will send you a prediction of where the assault team will be next as soon as possible.»"Thank you."

Allison nodded with a serious expression and got up from his seat. We turned off the anti-eavesdropping device, opened the heavy door made of special materials, and stepped out into the corridor, where a man was standing.9»Thank you, Allison. This is Lieutenant Colonel Elger.»He looked to be in his mid-thirties. The man, who exuded an air of strange energy somewhere between brazen and virile, approached us with a grin.»Perfectly convenient. Could you please comment on the German military base attack?»"What was perfect about that? You've been waiting in front of the secret lounge this whole time, haven't you?»Allison looked sternly at the man.

«No comment, of course. If you want to cover this incident, go to the joint press conference.»"No, no, as you know, I'm a freelancer. If I was doing the same things as the guys who get paid by a company, I'd dry up in no time.»The man made a joking remark, but Deputy Secretary Allison didn't pay him any more attention, just turned around and walked away. Then Zead stood in front of the man and said,

"Your press pass shouldn't get you this far, Lancaster.

I don't know what's going on, but if they don't leave quickly, I'll call security.

If that happens, your press pass will be confiscated and you will no longer be able to enter the E.C. Parliament Secretariat. Is that okay with you?"

"Well, I've been running all over the Huffman battlefields, so there's no place I can't get in, and I could easily outwit any stupid guards, even without a pass,»the man known as Lancaster boasted to Zead.

"Well, I was personally stopped by the ace of the British Special Forces, so even I can't be so reckless."

"I left the military a long time ago. You're not unaware of that, are you?»Zead replied matter-of-factly, and Lancaster scratched his head a little unnaturally. »Oops, no. I think he's now the leader of the E.C. Land Tactics Research Institute, wasn't he? I'm so used to being a soldier that I tend to forget.

So, as the leader of Durandal, what do you think about the attack on the German military base? You were ordered by the E - C Summit to investigate, right?"

"If you know that much, you can guess the answer, right? No comment whatsoever aside from the official announcement from the E.C. Council Office,»said Zead, pointing his index finger at Lancaster's nose.



### Mission 3 Suspicion

"We all know that you're a brilliant journalist, but that's why we're all so wary of you. Many of us are terrified of what you're going to expose next, and some idiots are even telling us to shut you up before you write your exposé.

You'd better not do anything too reckless."

"Hey hey, your sincere advice is much appreciated."

Lancaster responded with a grin.

Then I finally came to my senses and asked Jid.

is this by any chance the famous Frederick Lancaster, the man who uncovered the conspiracy behind the Second Huffman Dispute?"

"Yes, yes, that painting !"

Lancaster responds happily to Kanade from Zead.

"Wow, this is amazing. Are you a fan of mine?"

"Yes, I found 'The Island of the Fatherlands' very interesting."

Saying that, I smiled.

I thought the author would be more serious and calm.

Surprisingly, well, he's a cheerful and light-hearted person."

"Um, well, when I was writing that book, the circumstances were what they were. I had no choice but to get serious about it...but that's how it is. See you later.»It seemed Lancaster had realized that he had said or done something that would destroy the image he had for his readers, and with a slightly embarrassed look on his face, he quickly left the place.

And at the same time he disappeared down the hallway, Zead burst out laughing.»Well said, Elsa. Now he's probably realizing that he's no longer in the position of one-sidedly observing others, but is in the position of being observed as a celebrity,»Zead said with a laugh, and I shrugged.

"To be honest, if that is really Frederick Lancaster, I'm a little disappointed. I can't really respect a man who is so loose-lipped and talks endlessly about meaningless things.»"Haha, that's harsh.»Zead laughed pleasantly and started walking slowly.

Oceana New Continent

"That man has many friends and collaborators not only in his native country, the U.S., but also in the E.C., as well as in Zafta, Asia, Africa, and the Arab world. His network is far superior to that of a poor intelligence agency.

Although he is a tricky man, he is also known for being honest in return if you treat him with sincerity.

### Mission 3 Suspicion

He's not simply a man of justice, but he's not just an exposé either.»«In his book it says that he piloted a Wanzer and fought as a member of the mercenary unit Canyon Crow on Huffman Island. Is that true?»I whispered as I walked alongside Zead. Zead nodded readily.»Yes, it's true. People have different opinions about his skills as a Wanzer pilot and whether he was useful as a member of the mercenary unit, but it's true that he experienced some pretty harsh combat.

Although he may look like that, he's not all talk. His mouth is strong, but his arms and legs are also strong enough,»Zead continued, as if talking to himself.

"This incident is not something that can be solved by simply evaluating the Van Tour tactics. At worst, it seems like there could be a complex and bizarre political conspiracy on par with the Sakata Industries incident. However, if that is the case, in order to uncover the truth, we may need information beyond the reach of Durandal.

If that were to happen, I might have no choice but to make a deal with Lancaster and use his information network."

"Do we really have to go that far?"

When I asked, Jaid replied with a slight smile.

"Of course, there is the safe option of only carrying out the missions ordered by the E.C. Assembly and strictly adhering to the legal scope. However, as you know, Durandal is in a position where its very existence is in danger unless it can achieve success and be recognized, even if it has to go a little beyond its means.

It would be a different story if the lives of our members were in direct danger, but other than that, I, Tobiato, will not hesitate to use forceful methods."

Then, Zead's smile faded and he continued in a whisper.

Besides, if things go wrong and the E.C. and the U.S.N. go to war, we might lose the Hermes.

I can't stand by and watch this unfold. I must use whatever means necessary to stop it."

"I got it"

I replied in a whisper.

# MISSION 4

Poland's new  
resource zone

"As expected, there's simply not enough data to make any decent predictions. The fact that parts of the German government and military may be in contact with the assault force is just a disturbing factor,»Hermes sighed, looking at the display on the monitor.

"Moreover, if the raiding forces are not concerned about losses or casualties, and are prepared to be annihilated within E.C. territory, then it can be said that they can attack any fortress or important base they like. That makes it completely unpredictable.»

"I understand what you're trying to say, but you need to narrow it down somehow, otherwise you won't be able to do your job,»Zead replied with a wry smile.

"I know this is a drastic method, but let's start by eliminating purely military bases. Those places are able to defend themselves without us having to predict and warn them."

"But if the identity of the raiding force is a U.S.N. special forces unit, I think there's a good chance that their next target will be the E.C. naval base in The Hague. I don't think they'd be able to attack the Iberia Megafloat, though."

Hermes stated without hesitation, but now that I knew who he was, I felt a little startled.

Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

It ended up like this.

However, as expected, Zead responded with a completely calm attitude.

「No, that's not it.

"If they were to attack The Hague base by land, the Dutch army base in Utrecht would be a major obstacle. As they've left this behind and are attacking German bases, I think it's safe to say that the chances of The Hague base being attacked are low."

«Hmm, I guess so."

The problem is whether the raiding force is able to decide their targets as calmly and logically as Zead, Hermes groaned.

"Well, never mind. For now, I'll exclude purely military bases, but even so, I can't say I've narrowed it down very much. The capital Berlin, Hamburg, Munich, Frankfurt, Hanover, Cologne, Bremen, Dusseldorf, Dresden, and almost all of Germany's major cities are potential targets for attack."

"Hmm."

This time it was Zead who groaned and peered at the monitor Hermes was operating.

"Is Germany almost defenseless?"

"That's right. Five army bases were destroyed, and the air force base, naval base, and the remaining army base

They'd have their hands full just defending themselves. If a city were to come under attack, they'd probably mobilize quickly, but it would be too late, and in the meantime they'd be able to do whatever they wanted. Berlin is the only city with a capital defense force, though, so they might be able to defend themselves to some extent,»Hermes said, shrugging.

"In truth, if I were leading an assault force, I would quickly break into a city, no, a small town would be fine, somewhere where the defenses are thin, take civilians as hostages, and then attempt to escape from E.C. territory. Well, if it were a bunch of monsters like Glaser or Wagner, they might try to crush them along with the hostages, but I'm sure the politicians and the media wouldn't keep quiet.»"Well, I wonder.

In that case, the question is how the German government will respond, but if the German government is in contact with the raiding forces, it's hard to predict."

Zead tilted his head with a confused look on his face.

"You're right, there isn't enough data. Arrow If Number 3 were here, we might be able to get more specific information about the situation of the German army."

"Even so, there's nothing we can do if they're not there. We just heard they've been delayed by this whole incident and won't be able to come back from Iceland for another two or three days,»Hermes replied, sounding a bit dissatisfied. So I asked Zead.



#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

"Aro 13, you're the member on the road, right? Are you familiar with the German military?"

"Yeah, Aro-13 was in the German army before coming to Durandal. He's well-informed and has great intelligence analysis skills, so he would definitely be useful if he were here, but there's nothing we can do about it now that he's gone."

When Zead responded, Hermes sandwiched him from the side. It was a bit of a problem that my business trip destination was Iceland, which is quite close but outside of E.C. territory. When things get to this point, it's a hassle to call them back, and even if I contacted them to ask for advice, I'm sure the contents of my communications would be checked.

Or should I wait for him to come back?"

"No, we cannot afford that. I'm not exaggerating when I say that we need to make a prediction as quickly as possible, even if just a second earlier, otherwise there is a high risk that it will be too late."

Though he stated it firmly, Zead continued in a bitter tone.

«But I don't have any clues to narrow it down. Hermes is right, if the raiders want to, they can do whatever they want, anywhere in Germany."

"If that's the case, why don't you do something about it?"

At that moment, something suddenly flashed in my mind, and I began speaking quickly.

"After destroying five army bases, the raiding forces dispersed and went into hiding in Germany.

Oh, that's fine.

However, the retreat base on the Danish coast was seized, and one of the dispersed forces was captured by Blauer Nebel.

Normally, you would make your next move at this point, right? If you hesitate, your hiding place will be revealed one after another and you will be defeated one by one.」

"That's right."

Jido nodded and I continued speaking.

「But in reality, the hidden assault force has not yet made a move. On the other hand, it doesn't seem that Blauer Nebel has pursued and captured the hidden force, cornering them so severely that they have no time to move.

I think it's only natural to suspect that the raiding force and Blauer Nebel are somehow connected behind the scenes.»

"Yeah, I think that's quite a possibility."

continued speaking rather forcefully to stop him from interrupting.

"And if, as Deputy Secretary Allison suspects, the German government was using raiding units for election tactics, and Blauer Nebel was connected to that line, then there would be no more in Germany.

#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

I don't think there will be any serious fighting. In particular, if it ends up involving civilians and causing damage, it would be the worst case scenario for the current administration, so I think it's something they will absolutely avoid."

« Wait a minute, Elsa."

was confused, and Hermes stopped me.

"So, does that mean that the raiding forces that ruthlessly wiped out five army bases will not lay hands on civilians out of consideration for the German government with an upcoming election?"

"If the German government and the raiding force are secretly connected and pursuing each other's interests, I think that's entirely possible. Moreover, in that case, since Blauer Nebel, who is in charge of the search, is also a conspirator, even if their escape route is cut off, the raiding force can remain safely hidden within Germany, right? There's absolutely no need to rush and take civilians hostage."

When I pointed this out, Hermes sighed and held his forehead.

"That may be true, but that would be too disrespectful to the soldiers who were killed.»

"Of course. It's a given that people who become victims of political intrigues will never find happiness in the future."

Growling in a bitter tone, Zead looked at me and asked.

"Elsa, your reasoning is convincing, but there are other possibilities. For example, is it possible that the German government and Blauer Nebel are innocent, and that the cornered attacking force prioritized preserving their personnel over counterattacking and fighting to the death, so they secretly abandoned the van tours somewhere and are secretly attempting to escape outside the E.C. territory with just the personnel?»" I think that is a possibility. However, even if they abandoned the van tours, that doesn't mean they'll be able to escape outside the E.C. territory for sure. If they were caught in the middle of the escape, they'd be left empty-handed, and would not be able to commit suicide, let alone be captured,» I said, shaking my head.

"Of course, even if they can't commit suicide in a spectacular way, they can still commit suicide by using classic methods like putting poison in their teeth, cutting their own sword, or biting their tongue. However, if they commit suicide together with their Wanzer, the pilot's remains will be charred to the point that it is impossible to identify them, let alone their race or gender. However, if they simply commit suicide and leave their corpse behind, they could end up giving away more information to the enemy than if they had been captured alive. That said, if each person carried a large amount of explosives that would char them and cause a self-destruct, it would be heavy, conspicuous, and dangerous in many ways, so there would be almost no benefit to throwing away the Wanzers. Considering these risks, if the assault force felt cornered, I think they would choose to force their escape by taking hostages or some other means, rather than abandoning their main Wanzer.

#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

But"

"I see. If they are so adamant about destroying the evidence by self-destructing at the last minute, then they certainly wouldn't throw away the Venture equipped with a self-destruct device.»Zead nodded with an understanding look.

「Okay. I won't say it too loudly, but Durandal's basic understanding is that there is a high possibility that the German government and Blauer Nebel are in cahoots with the raiding force.

So, in that case, what will the assault team do next?  
we might do nothing and wait for an opportunity to escape. But if our goal is to provoke Germany and increase tensions between the E.C. and the U.S.N., we might attack key E.C. bases outside Germany."

As soon as I answered, Hermes asked again.

"So the target of the attack is probably the Hague base?"

"No, I don't think that's likely."

With that said, I shook my head again.

"If they were planning to invade Holland from Germany and attack the Hague base, they would have to destroy the Dutch military base in Utrecht first, even if it meant missing one or two German army bases.»"Oh, that's right. I forgot about that."

With a wry smile, Hermes began to retrieve the data.

"Well, rather than thinking about it too much, it'll be quicker to let the computer search for data that meets the conditions. The candidate site is outside of Germany. There are no military bases that could get in the way from the German border to the candidate site, and it's a key base that would deal a direct blow if the EC were to go to war with the U.S.N.»«Is there a place that conveniently meets those conditions?»Zead asked, and Hermes answered as she operated the keys.

"If I can't find a suitable location, I'll try changing the conditions. But for now, here it is... : Ah, there it is!»"The new resource area in Poland."

When I saw the relevant data displayed on the monitor, I glared at him a little.

they're not directly opposing the U.S.N. like Hague Base or Iberia Megafloat, but if this place were to be destroyed, it would be a major blow to E.C. as a whole.»«Yes, at the very least, they wouldn't be able to fight a long-term war on their own. Several types of rare metals essential to Wanzer production can in fact only be obtained within E.C. territory, in the new resource zone in Poland. Of course, they probably have some stockpiles, but I think the psychological pressure of not being able to replenish them is great.»

Saying this, Hermes looked at Zead.

"I think this is probably a done deal. Please convey this to Deputy Secretary Allison along with Elsa's recommendation.

#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

"That's true. It's a conjecture that assumes a betrayal of the German government and Blauer Nebel, so we can't make it public carelessly."

Zead nods with a difficult expression.

"I will contact Deputy Secretary Allison with that information as soon as possible."

"It seems like things are going in the wrong direction."

The day after I submitted my prediction to Undersecretary Allison that Poland's new resource areas would be attacked, I arrived at the central control room at the usual time. Zead, who had already arrived, suddenly spoke in a serious tone.»Undersecretary Allison contacted me just now. The German Chancellor, in a video conference with E.C. and other world leaders, officially announced information that he claimed to have obtained through Blauer Nebel's investigation. According to the information, the enemy, believed to be U.S.-N. special forces who attacked the German military base, is planning to attack coastal military facilities in order to re-secure a retreat route by sea and to strike a blow to E.C.'s maritime forces. Based on this information, the German military will place emphasis on the defense of its bases in Kiel and Rostock, but the German Chancellor apparently said that he would also like the Hague base in the Netherlands and the Gdansk base in Poland to be on high alert.»

«That could be ffl information.»

I groaned, and Zead responded with a grim expression.

"Exactly. It's true that with no way to retreat, it's possible that the raiding force might attack the coastal base in search of an opening, but if that's the case, they should have acted sooner. Even if they attacked a heavily defended naval base at this stage, it would be impossible to break through, let alone annihilate them.

However, if the Polish military's attention is to be directed towards the Gdansk base and the coast, and they intend to attack new resource areas, this information will be a terrible trap."

"So how did Deputy Secretary Allison respond?"

I asked, and Jaid shook his head.

"The current situation seems to be that they are at a loss as to how to respond. The current Polish government is basically pursuing a policy of cooperation with Germany, so unless there is extremely strong evidence, it is impossible to say that the German government may be in cahoots with the raiding forces.

he had planned to whisper to someone like E.C., a Polish member of parliament, that he had received unconfirmed information that the new resource area was being targeted, without giving any detailed reasons. However, Germany had gone ahead and made an official statement from the Prime Minister that the Gdansk base needed to be on guard. With this, it was doubtful whether anyone would even listen to him when he whispered that the new resource area was in danger.

"But that doesn't mean we can just sit back and watch, right?"

My voice involuntarily trembling, I asked Jid in a pleading tone.



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Then Zead responded in a serious tone.

"That's true, but the question is, what can we do and where can we go? For now, the orders we received from the E.C. Council to investigate the German base attack are still valid, so we can use that as a pretext to go to the new resource-rich areas of Poland.

However, if we go there and don't get cooperation from the Polish military there, we won't be able to do anything on our own. If we're not careful, it could turn out to be a repeat of the time when Wagner treated us like a nuisance at the German military base."

Saying that, Zead looked at the monitor, which was showing a map of the new resource zone in Poland.

«I've asked Deputy Secretary Allison to see if we can send a direct warning to the Polish military commander actually guarding the new resource area.

Regardless of the intentions of the Polish government and military brass, any decent soldier would try to take countermeasures if he was informed that there was a possibility of an enemy attack on the area he was guarding. However, neither Deputy Secretary Allison nor I have met the commander of the new resource zone security command, and we have almost no personal information about him, so even if we were able to talk to him directly, I don't know what the outcome would be.

At the very least, it should be quicker than going through politicians and bureaucrats who don't know much about military affairs."

Then Jed turned his gaze towards me.

"However, we cannot just sit around and wait for the next communication from Deputy Secretary Allison. Assuming that the Polish military will heed our advice and tactical guidance, we need to come up with a concrete plan for how we will defend our resource extraction facilities in the event that a German military base raiding force attacks the new Polish resource area.

Could you please examine the data and come up with a plan of action?"

"Yes, I understand"

I nodded and sat down in front of the empty monitor.

Normally, planning these kinds of operations was the job of officers, especially senior officers in staff positions, and as a NCO it was something I had almost no experience with. However, when actually operating a Wanzer, anyone who is willing to use their brains, even NCOs and regular soldiers, would naturally think about what kind of enemy they were facing and how they should attack to win. If you just follow orders from an officer without thinking about anything, your skills as a Wanzer pilot will not improve.

"The assault forces used a large number of rockets and missiles, quickly rendering the German base powerless to resist. In other words, if they were to get close enough to the mining facility that the rockets could reach, they would have essentially lost."

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In order to deal with the Venture troops equipped with rockets and missiles, the only way is to close the distance and engage in close combat. Therefore, even if it is a facility defense, it is necessary to be proactive. In order to do that, it is necessary to quickly and accurately determine the enemy's location. It may seem obvious, but if you don't know where the enemy is, there is no way to approach.

"Normally, the location of a Venture unit can be found with radar. If they were capable of dealing with the enemy that way, there's no way the German military base would have been so devastated. The basic approach to quickly spotting a unit with excellent concealment is to gather a number of patrol planes and Ventures and have them spread out and search... But I don't think they have the military strength to do that."

I glared at the data I had called up, dazed.

"Let's reverse the roles of offense and defense and think about what would be most troubling for us if we were to be defended. If we were to attack, we'd have no point getting close to the mining facilities, so the most troubling thing would be for them to set up a patrol line all around them. In that case, we'll set up a patrol line on the outer edge, and if an attacking force gets caught, we'll have the defending forces charge in as quickly as possible and strike them in close combat. It's a simple plan, but in the end, it's probably the only option.»The problem was how to set up the patrol line, and I tilted my head to one side, thinking that it might be quicker to consult Hermes about the technical details.

Then, without anyone noticing, Hermes had arrived at the central control room and was giving a passionate speech to Zead. It seems that I hadn't heard what she was saying until now because I was concentrating on planning the operation.

V

"Just one more person makes a big difference. And Latona has plenty of combat experience. If she links up with Elsa, depending on how they fight, the two of them could become the fighting force equivalent to a platoon.»"But we're not going out to fight."

Zead responded in a tone that sounded a bit overwhelmed.

"Fighting raiding forces is the job of the Polish military, guarding the new resource area. All we can do is provide them with information, warn them, and, if requested, teach them effective tactics. As you always say, Durandal is not an army.»"I understand that very well, but there could be times when we have no choice but to fight, right? Like in Denmark."

Hermes continued, sounding strangely plausible.

"It's better to be safe than sorry. It would be best if we didn't have to fight, but there's no harm in preparing our fighting forces, right?"

"That's true, but Latona, are you sure it's okay for you to leave the duties you're supposed to be in charge of?"

Zead's words made me think, and I turned around. I saw not only Hermes, but also Latona, with her arms crossed, who looked, how should I put it, like she couldn't be moved even with a lever.

#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

He was floating and standing by the wall of the central control room. It seemed like he was serious about joining us.

Then she turned to Zead and said sternly:

"I've finished all the work I need to do. I have some final explanations to give to my client, but that's Arrow. There should be no problem if I leave it to Number Four. In fact, things might go more smoothly without me around."

Staring intently at Zead, Latona continues speaking brusquely.

"I heard there was a battle in Denmark. Sure, the leader is a veteran warrior, and I know that Arrow 6 is excellent, but even so, I could be of some use if I were there. At the very least, I think a mission that suits me better would be dealing with dangerous people who don't mind killing people and then blowing themselves up, rather than trying to curry favor with the bigwigs of a weapons company."

"Well, I understand how you feel, but it hasn't been decided yet that we're going to Poland,»Zead replied soothingly, but at that moment his portable radio started to ring.

"rude"

Zead politely declined and took out his portable communicator. Then, after whispering a few words, he quickly put the communicator away and looked around at us with a serious expression.

"This is Deputy Secretary Allison. He's been in direct contact with the security commander for the new resource area in Poland. Deputy Secretary.

According to the report, the commander took the warning seriously, said he would immediately step up security, and requested to receive Tejulandar's advice."

"Well, we're going to Poland right away, that's it!»Hermes cried cheerfully, but Zead turned to me and asked,»Elsa, have you come up with a plan for defense?"

"Yes, the general idea."

As soon as I responded, Zead, Hermes, and even Latona gathered in front of the monitor where I was reviewing the plan. And before I could explain, Zead looked at the monitor and said,»X/."

"I guess we should set up a patrol line and defend the perimeter. The only way to counter the Venturers' long-distance attacks is to get in as quickly as possible and attack them."

"But the problem is how to set up the patrol line. The Polish military probably doesn't have many troops available for patrols."

When I said that, Hermes responded with glee.

"In that case, we should scatter heat sensors. They won't be useful in urban areas or places with a lot of car traffic because they will disturb the signals, but the outer edge of Poland's new resource zone is mostly rocky mountains and wilderness, except for where the industrial roads run.

#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

a Wanzer passes overhead, it will definitely be able to catch it.»"But isn't Poland's new resource area quite large? If we were to scatter sensors all around the periphery, we'd need a considerable number of them.

Even if you were to purchase ready-made products from a manufacturer, wouldn't that take too much time, effort and expense?

Latona pointed out sharply, but Hermes just grinned and shook her head.

"And guess what, we currently have a whole bunch of heat sensors in the warehouse at Durandal HQ. We just so happened to have been contracted by a certain manufacturer to develop a new type of sensor for Van Tours, and when we asked them to send over their old-model heat sensors as reference material, for some reason they sent so many that the warehouse was full. I think they probably had a surplus of stock and were struggling to find a place to store them. If we can make good use of them, then everything will be OK.»"What a convenient story,»Latona groaned in amazement, and Hermes shrugged her shoulders lightly.

"Well, if anything, I knew I had some spare heat sensors on hand, so I thought I could use them to set up a patrol line. If I didn't have the sensors, I'm sure I would have thought of some other method.»"Either way, as long as it solves the problem, that's fine."

Zead declared with a serious face.

"Immediately, take the sensors out of the warehouse and load them onto the transport plane. We'll be dispatched to Poland as soon as they're ready."

"OK.

"Also, I'd like to explain the link system to Elsa, is that okay?»Hermes asked, and Zead frowned slightly.

"If you think it's necessary, that's fine, but please do it quickly. It would be no laughing matter if we took our time with the preparations, only to arrive in Poland only to find that the attack had already taken place.»"In that case, I'll explain the link. Hermes will have to arrange for the sensors to be loaded, right?"

Latona suggested, and Hermes nodded in agreement.

"Well then, please be kind to me.

That's right, if we were to load a warehouse full of sensors, we'd need a large transport aircraft, and in that case, I wouldn't be able to pilot it alone. I'd have to make arrangements with the pilot. I wonder who's free right now."

Grumbling, Hermes left the central control room.

Briefing Ring

Meanwhile, Zead used the central control room's communications system to inform the Polish New Resource Zone security commander,



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I applied for a direct call. It would be a hassle because it was a military facility, but since Deputy Secretary Allison had spoken first, it should be quick once I got through.

Then Latona began explaining the link system to me.

"The Link System is a system that connects the computers of the Wanzers together to automatically coordinate combat. New Continent Oceana's a system that allows you to do this. Apparently U.S.N. and OC-U.'Zaftra are also researching it, but Durandal's link system is Hermes's pride and joy, and he himself says that it's without a doubt the best in the world. However, I don't know much about the technical details of programming, calculation speed, and the like, and I don't think you need to know either.

"So, what exactly happens when we link our computers is, when my Wanzer attacks an enemy, if your Wanzer is within range, it will automatically perform a coordinated attack. Normally, when it's a coordinated attack, there's a slight difference in timing, but a linked attack is completely simultaneous, so even a Wanzer equipped with a shield won't be able to block the attacks of either one.»"That's certainly an impressive technique."

When I expressed my admiration, Latona waved her hand lightly and continued speaking.

"No, according to Hermes, the effect of linked attacks doesn't end there. Automatic attacks are triggered regardless of manual attack operations, so if you and I attack the same target, we will each attack twice, once manually and once automatically. Of course, if we use guns, it will consume twice as much ammunition,

When using a melee weapon, you are forced to make some pretty unnatural movements, but even so, doubling the number of attacks is an incredible effect."

« That's right."

I was silently dazzled by how incredible this would be for an opponent. Being caught in a pincer attack from two directions was difficult enough, but if the attacks were perfectly synchronized and burst out twice in a row for a total of four times, most Van Tours would be defeated without a second thought.

"Hermes says that in the future, he wants to link all of the computers in the Wanzers that make up our team and even synchronize their missile attacks, but for now, he wants to just link my Wanzer with yours and get some operational data."

As I said that, Latona's expression tightened as she stared at me.

"So, this is a word of advice from me, not Hermes.

The Zenith you're using is certainly an excellent unit that's easy to handle and quick to move, but its armor is too thin and its joints are too fragile. In real combat, even if it was a lucky hit, it would likely come to a complete halt. And if you're up against a villain that mercilessly shoots at pilots who escape, once the Wanzer halts, it's certain to die in battle.

Although the speed of movement will decrease, it would be better to at least switch to Quint.

#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

"Uh-huh ..."

Oceana's advice, but Quint... I tilt my head. The Wanzer, manufactured by Iguchi, an O.C.U. - affiliated company, I had test -ridden it when I was in the French military, and compared to the Zenith I was used to, it felt a lot sluggish. Of course, if it was a Durandal model, it would have been adjusted to be much more nimble and agile, but I still felt like it wasn't really suited to me.

"You on Quint?"

"No, I'm riding a Mark V from Stoke."

Surprisingly, Latona named the Ventour, manufactured by the U.S.N. company Freyman.»When it comes to agility, it's at the top level in the world. Also, although it's not as good as the Quint, it's armored compared to the Zenith, and its joints are pretty sturdy too.

Arm gun

However, since the structure of the arms is designed for combat from the start, the accuracy of the gun is quite low. For that reason, I can't recommend it to you.

When she said that, Latona tilted her head slightly.

Arm Parts Chimera :»No, but if it's just the arms that are the problem, we could replace them with parts with higher accuracy and make it a heterogeneous hybrid. I'll check with Hermes later if that's possible.»"But if you make it a heterogeneous hybrid, normally the balance will be poor and the performance will decrease, right?

Or will it be okay if it's made with Durandal?"

Feeling suspicious, I asked Latona. It's true that each part of a Wanzer is basically interchangeable with any company's product, but it's common knowledge among Wanzer pilots and mechanics that if you completely replace the arms and legs of a Wanzer with a different type, it will usually lose its balance, and in the worst case scenario, it will break down so frequently that it will become unusable. So, although it is sometimes done as a stopgap measure when parts are in short supply on site, it is rare for a pilot to pilot a hybrid Wanzer from the start.

But Latona responded nonchalantly.

"That doesn't mean everything will work, but if we let Hermes adjust it, even hybrids can be used in almost the same way as regular products.

Still, I think that for those of average skill, a Quint is safer than a Stoke hybrid, but since you're good at piloting a Zenith, a Stoke might be a better fit for you."

"Maybe so"

I nodded and gave a small shrug.

"But in any case, if you change planes, you need to do some practice driving. Do you have the time?"

"No. But even if I were to keep it as Zenith, how about the training to master the link system?"

#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

It is still necessary.

The next best thing would be to have them trained in a simulator on the plane to Poland."

Saying this, Latona frowned slightly and scratched her head.

"Durandal's simulator is a special one that Hermes had made, and it allows it to operate with a feeling that is quite close to that of a real battle. Even so, it's not exactly the same as a real battle, but well, it's much better than nothing.

Of course, I'll join you, so you'll have to hurry up and learn the tricks of link attacks."

"yes"

Please, be gentle, I added without letting the corpse know.

"Alright then, timeout. You two did a great job."

voice came through the headset and I gasped.

During my time in the French army, I had several experiences of using simulators for combat training, but perhaps the machines were of low functionality or poorly programmed, but they were little more than the van tour action games you find in amusement parks, and I did not see any practical use for training at all.

However, Durandal's simulator was on an entirely different level. First of all, the cockpit of the actual aircraft used in battle is used as the simulator, which makes it incredibly realistic in itself. The simulation operations are exactly the same as when piloting a real aircraft, and even the vibrations and noise are reproduced almost exactly. To put it in perspective, if a normal simulator feels like a game or a movie, Durandal's simulator is like having an incredibly realistic dream. The only thing they have in common is that it's not real, but the impact you experience is fundamentally different.

The virtual Wanzers that were set up as enemies in the simulator were so shrewd, merciless, and effective in their attacks that it was almost infuriating. According to Latona, the battle patterns of these virtual Wanzers were programmed by Hermes, and although there were fully automatic, unmanned Wanzers that ran on the same program, she was serious about thinking they might be stronger than any Wanzer piloted by an average pilot.

I have no confidence that I would survive an attack from two or more virtual Wanzers at the same time, let alone one-on-one. However, Latona and ;^'s Wanzers, linked together by the Link System, were able to take on not just two, but up to eight virtual Wanzers at once and successfully annihilate them all. This was certainly because the Link System was effective, but I thought it was more because Latona was incredibly skilled as a Wanzer Hero, or rather as a warrior.

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Latona's fighting style is very simple. She quickly dives into the enemy aircraft and slams the pile bunker attached to the left arm of her Ventour to break through the armor. One wrong move and she runs the risk of being hit by gunfire from close range, but her skill and the agility of her stalk prevent the enemy from taking aim. Even the virtual Ventour, which is supposed to be unfazed, can't aim properly, so it must be even more so for a human pilot.

Moreover, no matter what model the enemy was, Latona would always aim precisely at the computer core and slam into it with her pile bunker. If it hit directly it could be rendered inoperable in one hit, and even if it was slightly off, if it managed to damage the wiring near the computer core it would undoubtedly cause serious damage. In fact, even if I attacked alone, the virtual Wanzers would be able to dodge with ease, but after being hit by her attacks it became almost impossible to avoid, and they were hit directly by gunfire and destroyed.

“In the end, in order to utilize the link system, I have to keep up with her speed. That’s essentially all that matters.”

Without saying a word, I was dazzled. In fact, during the first few simulator battles, I was unable to keep up with the Latona's speed, and my Wanzer ended up farther away than it could fire, causing me to miss the opportunity for a linked attack. If I made such a foolish move in a real battle, I would not only be putting myself in danger, but also Latona.

Fortunately, the Hybrid Wanzer I was to pilot, which consisted of a Stoke's torso and legs connected to Quint's arms, was functioning very smoothly, even with the help of a power turbocharger pack, so I would n't be left behind due to differences in the unit's performance. The only thing left to consider was my skill.»I was able to keep up in the simulated races, but whether I could do well in real combat is something I'll just have to do my best."

Feeling dizzy, I got out of the Wanzer's cockpit and removed the headset. I looked over and saw that Latona had already gotten out of the Wanzer and was talking to Hermes about something, but when she noticed me, she immediately called out to me.

What were your impressions of piloting a hybrid Wanzer?"

"Excellent. Hard to believe it's a hybrid."

When I responded, Hermes' expression showed obvious relief.

"I see, that's good to hear. I haven't really done much with hybrids that have interchangeable arms before, so I was wondering how it would feel to actually use them."

"Oh really? So, what kind of hybrids have you created up until now?»I asked, intrigued, and Hermes answered as if it was the most obvious thing to say.

"That's right, it's a replacement for the legs of the missile-equipped machine used by Zead. All of the ready-made support-type Wanzers are slow. Like this time, it's something that needs to move quickly over a wide area.



#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

When you anticipate a situation, replace the legs in advance.

"But, when you attach fast-running legs to a heavy missile-equipped machine, the balance is inevitably poor. The Hybrid I tuned was only at a level that Zead's skill was able to pilot, but if it was a normal Wanzer pilot, there's no doubt that it would topple over the moment it took one step forward."

"The leader's skills are truly incredible, being able to pilot such an aircraft and even perform fighter maneuvers and airborne drops.»

Latona spoke with a dazzling sincere tone.

Then, an announcement came from Captain Robert, the private pilot of the large transport plane:»We will soon arrive at the Polish New Resource Zone Airport. We will be landing shortly, so everyone please fasten your seat belts."

"Oops, I can't.

"Even if we take data from a simulator, it's pointless if we don't adjust the van tour accordingly."

Operator Seat Hermes hurriedly headed to the seat reserved for the operator of the VanTour adjustment computer and fastened her safety belt.

"I have to work here, so please take care of the meeting with the Polish army, J.

Could you please pass that on to Do?"

"Oh, I see."

Latona nodded and urged me on.

"Let's go, Elsa."

"yes"

followed Latona almost feeling like a recruit following the orders of a veteran soldier. But with her as my companion, this feeling wasn't so bad.

"Nice to meet you. I'm Remel, in charge of security at the new resource zone's central base. I'm really grateful to everyone from Durandal for coming."

Polish officer who greeted us shook hands with Zid and greeted him in fluent English. He looked to be in his thirties. It would be misleading to describe him as a gentle man who didn't look like a soldier, but he had a calm and composed demeanor.

And when Zead returned the greeting, Remel spoke in a slightly apologetic tone.

"There are four bases in this new resource area: North, East, South, and Central. We were warned that the troops that had destroyed the German base could attack at any time, so unfortunately, the people in charge of the other three bases have decided to stay at their posts and talk to you all via TV line.

Four

Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

I chose it."

"Yes, I think it's a very thoughtful consideration."

Zead responded calmly as well.

"Well then, let's open the line and hear about the security situation at each base.»"Yes."

When Rehmel nodded, the operator opened the TV line and three men appeared on the monitor. The screen wasn't very large, so it was hard to make out the details of their appearances, but they all had a stern, military-like look and looked older than Rehmel.

They introduced themselves as the people in charge of their respective bases and described the security situation in a stern tone. It seemed more like they were reporting to Rehmel than explaining things to us. Then, one of the people in charge suddenly spoke at the end of the explanation.

"That is the situation here, Lieutenant Colonel."

"Eh? Lieutenant Colonel?"

I was careful not to say it out loud, but I found myself staring at Rehmel's calm appearance. It would not have been strange for him to be a lieutenant colonel, as he was the person in charge of guarding such a large and important facility, but based on his appearance I had assumed he was a captain or perhaps a lieutenant, so I was honestly surprised.

Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Remel gave a brief explanation to the three officers about the security situation at the central base and the entire new resource zone.

"Normally, when the new resource zone is on high alert like it is now, patrol aircraft and the like would come from the air force base to provide support, but at this time the air force is concentrating all its efforts on patrolling the coastal areas, so there is no support here. Therefore, as each person in charge reported earlier, in addition to keeping an eye on radar, we are sending out Vantour patrol units from each base to patrol.»"Understood. Considering your current forces, I think this is the best way to deal with this,»Zead commented in a matter-of-fact tone.

"In order to effectively defend this vast new resource area, early detection of an attacking force is of utmost importance. For the time being, we will be conducting aerial patrols by aircraft, but in addition to that, we have a plan to spread sensors and set up a patrol line. If you would allow us, we would like to try it out."

«Sensors? Where are you going to put them?"

Lieutenant Colonel Remel asked in a confused manner, to which Zead replied simply.

"The planner will explain this operation, Elsa."

"Y-Yes."

Having been suddenly nominated, I responded somewhat flustered, but Zead gave me instructions as if it was the most natural thing in the world.

#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

"Please explain your plan to the Polish military."

"yes"

I couldn't help thinking, »Are they really going to do this without any warning?", but I couldn't make a fool of myself in front of the Polish soldiers. So, in as calm a tone as possible, I explained our plan to scatter thermal sensors and set up a patrol line.

"I see, that's great."

When I finished my explanation, to my delight, Lieutenant Colonel Rehmel was the first to give his praise. »If a patrol detects an enemy attack with missiles or rockets from a long distance, there's a high risk that they will have approached so close that it will be too late. If we can catch and intercept the enemy on the outer edge, we can minimize damage to the facility.» «That's true. However, we still don't know for sure how the unit that attacked the German base managed to conceal its presence and avoid detection. We still have no proof that a patrol line using heat sensors is effective."

When I told him with some enthusiasm, Lieutenant Colonel Rehmel nodded deeply.

we won't rely solely on heat sensors. We'll also continue radar surveillance and Wanzer patrols. In addition, you will be watching from the air, so no matter how stealthy our unit is, it will be impossible for them to enter the new resource area undetected.

## Front Mission 4 1

"I think it's impossible."

The lieutenant colonel then continued, smiling.

"Even so, your plan to set up an even longer patrol line on the periphery of the vast new resource zone without wasting manpower or combat power is truly brilliant. It was well worth the trouble of having you come all the way here.»

"I'm honored to receive your praise. However, the idea of using sensors to form a patrol line was suggested by another member, not mine,»I replied with a wry smile, but Lieutenant Colonel Rehmel shook his head with a smile.

"It is natural that several people pool their ideas together to create a good plan. And because you have great talent, you are able to be the central figure in the plan and bring the ideas together. In fact, I think it would be quite difficult for you to incorporate other people's ideas into your own plan and not monopolise all the credit, given your youth."

"No, not at all."

Suddenly, I felt a strange, awkward sensation in my chest, and I became a little embarrassed.

"Well, speaking of young, you are quite young yourself."

When I blurted out in frustration or panic, Nakasho responded very seriously.

#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

"The reason I was promoted so quickly for my age was because I was in the unit that first introduced van tours to the Polish military. It's like having a high rank as a test pilot or a cosmonaut.

However, even in the Polish Army, Wanzer units now make up the main force, so it is not uncommon to find officers who serve as Wanzer pilots. Among them, I am being tested to see if I have the ability to be worthy of the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.»«That is not a problem. I believe that you possess excellent insight and judgment as a commander."

I wasn't trying to flatter him or anything; I was serious. Lieutenant Colonel Rehmel smiled again.

"thank you"

Then, perhaps sensing that the conversation was getting off track, Zead interjected,»Well then, we will now scatter heat source sensors from the transport plane to set up a patrol line, and then transition to aerial patrol."

"Yes, thank you very much."

With that, Lieutenant Colonel Remel gave a very natural salute. Durandal is not a military force, so it would be strange to return a military salute, but Zead, Latona, and I all returned the salute almost reflexively.

Perhaps it was fortunate that Hermes wasn't there.

"All right, sensor spraying is complete. There are no problems with the landing position or operation status,»Hermes announced after checking the instruments.

"For now, with this, we have done all the preparations we can do. Now, all that's left is to wait while patrolling to see if the raiding force really is coming."

"But will this German military base raiding force actually come?"

Latona asked in a suspicious tone and I shook my head.

"I don't know. If my speculation is correct, and the raiding force is secretly connected to the German government, then it's possible that information about us coming to the new resource area and helping to strengthen security there may have been leaked to the raiding force by the Polish government, via the German government.

If that's the case, they might wait until our defenses relax.»"If that happens, it'll be troublesome. A state of high alert would place an excessive burden on personnel, so the Polish military probably won't be able to continue it for very long. Also, the operational lifespan of sensors once deployed is not that long."

Zead groaned, frowning.

"Well, on the other hand, if the raiding forces do not move and the alert state of the coastal areas is lifted, the Air Force



#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

We may be able to count on support. Durandal also thinks it's about time for Arrow Number 3 should be back soon, so if it turns into a long battle, we could ask him to back us up."

can call in Arrow 4 instead of just Arrow 13. Well, it's a little better than a cat's paw, at least."

Latona said with a bit of sarcasm.

Suddenly, an alarm rang out inside the transport plane, and at the same time Hermes shouted in a loud voice.

"West-side sensors are responding! Wanzer forces are invading!"

"You've arrived! Let's rush to the scene immediately!"

Zead responded immediately, issuing orders. The sensor reaction had sent out an alarm not only to the Durandal transport plane, but also to the four Polish military bases. The commanders in charge of each base were probably ordering their respective Venturer units to make an emergency launch.

But the next moment, Hermes shouted quickly.

"Wait! This invading Wanzer unit is not a slow long-distance attack unit! Their invading speed is too fast! It's like a rocket !

"What did you say?"

Zead's face went pale as Hermes stared at the monitor and told him a shocking truth:»This speed is not the speed at which a Wanzer can travel! What kind of equipment are they using?

"I don't know why, but I can't help but think they're flying on their own! The invading enemy is definitely a high-speed assault force!"

"Then where is the invasion force's target? The central base?»Zead asked angrily, to which Hermes replied immediately,»Definitely! They're heading straight for them!»"Elsa, send an emergency message to the central base! Advise them not to advance, but to remain inside the base and intercept the assault force !"

"roger that!"

No sooner had Zead given his orders than I called the Polish Central Base Command Center.»This is Durandal! Judging from the speed at which the invading Wanzer unit is moving, it appears to be a high-speed assault force ! I recommend that you do not advance from the base, but instead defend while waiting for reinforcements from other bases !"

"N-No way! I've already given the order to advance and intercept them, and sent out the Venturers !"

The panicked voice that answered was not that of Lt. Colonel Rehmel. Without thinking, I raised my voice and shouted,»If that's the case, please call back the troops immediately! And what about Lt. Colonel Rehmel? Has he left leading the interception force?"

#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

"No, Lieutenant Colonel, he is out on patrol leading a patrol.

Anyway, we are going to withdraw the interception force !"

With that, someone at the Central Base Command Center hung up the phone without waiting for my reply. They were probably ordering the interception force commander to retreat.

And I was half stunned and dazzled.

«What on earth were you thinking, Lieutenant Colonel, leading a patrol as the Commander-in - Chief?»

came to understand all too well the seemingly reckless methods of Lt. Colonel Remel. If a young Lt. Colonel who had been promoted as a Wanzer pilot just stayed in the command room acting like a commander, it would be difficult for him to convince the soldiers under his command. Only by getting in a Wanzer, taking the lead on the front lines, and sharing the risks and hardships with his subordinates, many of whom were older than him, could he win their trust, gain their respect, and lead the unit.

«.But if you die in battle, you'll lose all your popularity."

Of course, just because they were on a patrol in the direction an assault force was coming from didn't mean they were guaranteed to encounter the enemy. But if they did encounter them, Lieutenant Colonel Rehmel would likely do everything in his power to stop the assault force, and if that happened, the annihilation of the patrol would be inevitable. And the enemy would mercilessly shoot at the Wanzer pilots who escaped after their aircraft was destroyed.

"This is the central base patrol unit, we have encountered an invading force and are currently engaged in combat...»

At that moment, the broken voice of Lieutenant Colonel Rehmel suddenly came over the radio, and a chill ran through my body.

"The invasion force uses detachable disposable rockets. ::With incredible speed, the main invasion weapon is an explosive shell cannon. Engagement in open areas is extremely dangerous. We will deal with the situation by staying in our base .»"Understood! The interception force that launched from the central base has already been ordered to return to their base ! So, you too should fall back!"

I shouted into the radio, but I wonder if the Lieutenant Colonel heard me.

Lieutenant Colonel Rehmel's voice continued with a pained tone.

"The enemy is relentlessly attacking and crushing the pilots who escaped. It's just as Durandal reported. The patrol unit has already... The units can't hold out any longer. I'm sorry, but I'll leave the rest to you.»

"Lieutenant Colonel!"

I screamed, but the radio didn't respond.

Then, Captain Robert's tense voice echoed throughout the plane.

"The central base is in sight. It looks like there's a lot of gunfighting going on. What should we do?"

Drop Bazooka

We'll airdrop in a Venturer. Get as close as possible to the effective range of the explosive grenade cannon,»Zead responded without hesitation, and the captain clicked his tongue loudly.

#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

"You'll tell me exactly what you want. Well, pray that you don't get lucky.»"Thank you."

Saying this, Jid looked around at us and declared.

"let's go"

"Countdown, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, descend!»

At Captain Robert's signal, I launched the Venture into the air, and immediately afterwards, a loud explosion rang out behind us.

"The transport plane was destroyed?"

managing to stop myself from turning around reflexively, I concentrated on keeping the Wanzer in the air. Even if the transport plane was hit directly by an explosive cannon fired from the ground and blown to pieces, and Zead and Hermes, who were supposed to descend after me, were killed in action, all I could do was to coordinate with the Latona unit, which had descended first, and fight the enemy on the ground with all my might. And as soon as we landed, my Wanzer fired against my will. The Latona unit was fighting nearby, so a linked attack was activated.

"There!"

As the enemy plane fired its shotgun at me with a link attack, I changed position and fired more machine gun fire.

The enemy's explosive cannon explodes, blowing off the arm and all.»Leave the enemy who has lost their weapon alone! There are plenty of enemies that must be dealt with first !"

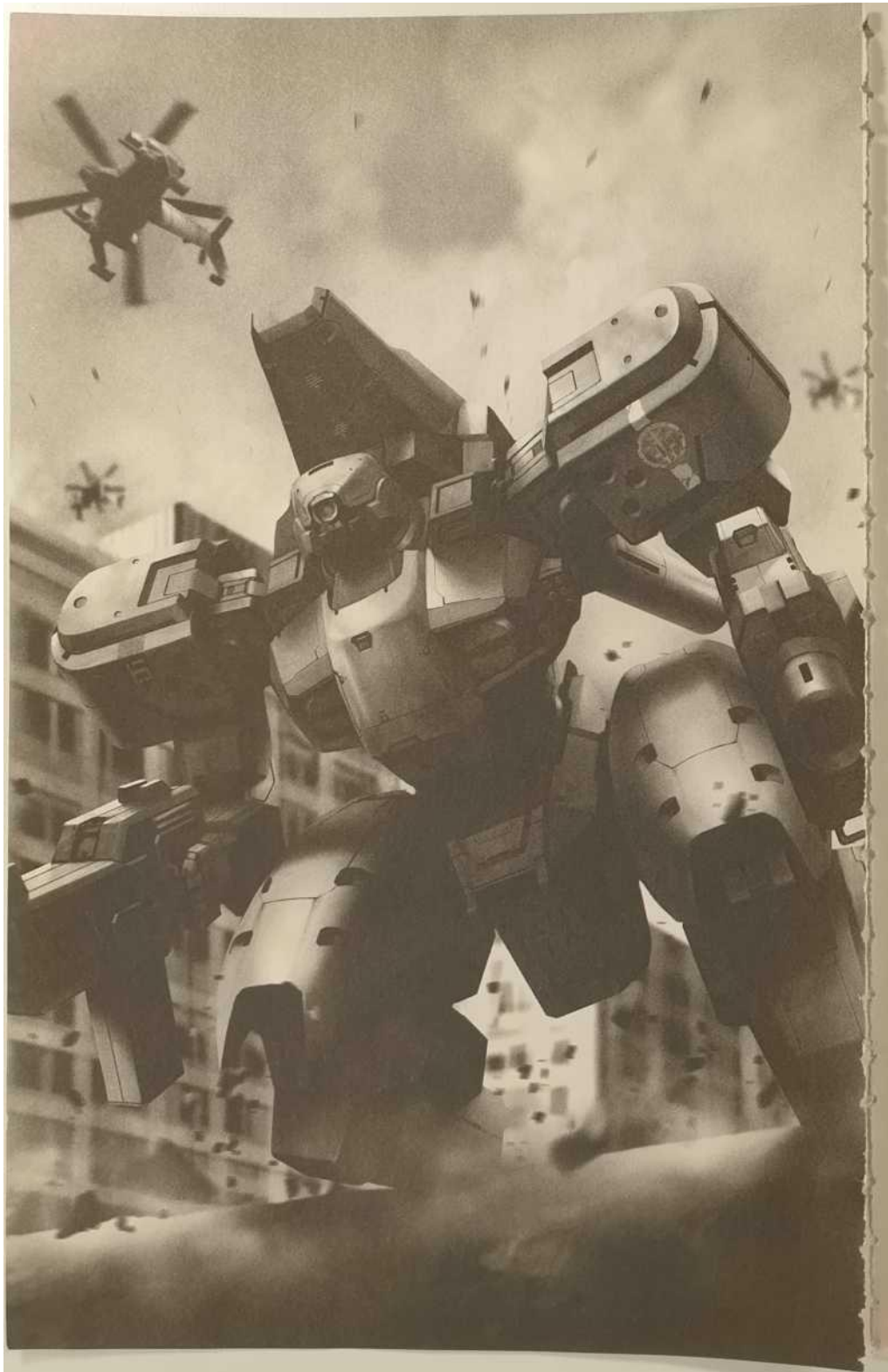
Just as I was about to launch a follow-up attack, Latona gave me orders in a sharp voice, and I quickly weaved my way through the base, which was lined with resource mining facilities. I tried my best to keep up with her. And then,

The Latona machine jumps out from between the bazooka facilities, attacks a large Wanzer that is pointing its explosive cannon at the Polish Wanzers, and hits it with a pile bunker.

"received!"

My Wanzer jumped sideways to avoid being in the shadow of Latona's machine, and first fired its shotgun with automatic linkage, followed by its machine gun. The targeted Wanzer lost its explosive shell cannon and arm, rendering it unable to fight.

It was then that I realized something. Latona prioritized putting the enemy aircraft out of action over destroying it, so it attacked its explosive shell cannon and arms rather than its torso. I couldn't help but marvel at how calm it was in this situation. Then, an enemy Vantour, which was quite a distance away, fired its explosive shell cannon at Latona's aircraft. Latona's aircraft dodged it at the last moment, but was knocked off balance by the blast. I tried to aim my aircraft at the enemy Vantour, which was holding its explosive shell cannon, by charging towards it, but I was still too far away. The enemy aircraft then aimed its explosive shell cannon back at me.



At that moment, a missile came flying from the side and hit the enemy plane's fuselage head on. Taking advantage of the enemy plane's swaying moment, my Van Tour jumped into the range of the gun and mercilessly fired a barrage of shots. Normally, the enemy plane would have been damaged to the point that the pilot would have had to escape, but as expected, it erupted in flames and self-destructed.

"Jeed, you're safe!"

the self-destructing enemy Wanzer, I called out to the Wanzer that had been firing missiles at me from the side. There was no mistaking the bizarre silhouette of this hybrid Wanzer, a Valiant F heavy support Wanzer made by Diable Avionics, a major U.S.N. military contractor, with the legs of an O.C.U. - made Iguchi Quint attached to the fuselage. Really, airdropping from a damaged transport plane in such an obviously unbalanced machine, Zead's skill was godlike.

And Zead quickly responded.

«Hermes and I managed to airborne land, but our transport plane was hit by an explosive cannon and had to make an emergency landing. We can't expect support from the air, but we must hurry and repel the enemy.» "There's an enemy Vantour over there ! Let's go, Elsa!» With that brief command, Latona's plane took off. I, Zead's plane, and Hermes' plane, which had timidly appeared from the other side of Zead's plane, all took off running after Latona's plane.



#### Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

Yes, right now, all my emotions - the joy that my comrades were safe, the anger towards the ruthless enemy, the sadness, the hatred, the regret - are frozen. I must fight the enemy with all my might.»Enemy planes have been spotted. We'll fire the missiles first."

Zead declares, firing a missile over the building of the facility. The explosive shell cannon has a long range, but of course it cannot retaliate beyond the building. Thankfully, one of the enemy aircraft is hit directly in the arm by a missile, blowing away its explosive shell cannon.

«Nice shot, Zead!"

Latona immediately leapt out from behind the building, ignoring the disarmed Wanzer.

She attacked one of the planes. I tried to follow her, but the unarmed enemy forced their way in between us.

"obstacle!"

Without even realizing it, I screamed out loud and mercilessly fired my machine gun at the armless enemy Wanzer from close range. The me from before, that is, an hour ago, might have hesitated a little, but I no longer had that kind of leeway.

I push back the unarmed enemies and forcefully advance forward, firing my machine gun. As for the shotgun, it is linked to the Latona's attack, so it automatically targets and fires at enemy planes.

Then, a Polish van came out from behind a building and fired its machine gun at the enemy plane.

The two enemy planes, already at a disadvantage, instantly receive fatal damage, spew flames and self-destruct. The Polish Wanzers pilot, who narrowly avoided the explosion, asks in a bewildered tone in heavily accented English:

"Are you guys Durandal? What on earth are these guys? They're committing suicide without even escaping."

"We don't have time to talk! There are still enemies out there, aren't there?"

I instinctively replied in a stern tone. Then Zead's voice came over the headset.»We've received an announcement from Central Base Command that the invading forces have begun to withdraw. The Polish military seems to have given orders not to pursue them too far, but we'll pursue the retreating enemy. We can't use transport planes either, but it seems the large rockets the enemy used for their high-speed invasion are detachable and disposable. If they're withdrawing on foot using their Wanzers, then hopefully we can catch up with them."

"roger that!"

I immediately responded and headed toward the ZEAD aircraft. Then, a Polish soldier asked me anxiously,»What should we do?"

"Of course, you should follow the orders of the headquarters."

So I said, and drove off in my Van Tour. If Lt. Col. Mel had been alive, he might have gone out of his way to provide some assistance, but that is something we should not hope for.

Mission 4 Poland's new resource area

the patrol members who had been annihilated in combat with the merciless enemy would survive. At that moment, I suddenly felt tears well up in my eyes.

Lieutenant Colonel Rehmel, who had praised my plan for the best possible strategy, was dead. Dead.





Wandering

MISSION 5

"What is this? They've made a huge oversight, I'm afraid,»I thought silently as we pursued the troops that had attacked the new resource area in Poland in our van.

were retreating on foot in their VanTours, but their speed was almost the same as that of the pursuing Durandal side. In other words, unless some change occurred in the situation, the gap between them would neither widen nor close.

Once it was confirmed that repairing the crash-landed transport plane would not be an easy task, Zead contacted Durandal HQ and requested that a replacement transport plane be sent immediately. However, since there was no spare plane on standby at all times, even Zead did not know at this stage how long it would take to arrange for a replacement plane and pilot. In addition, flying from Durandal HQ to Poland would require crossing the skies over Germany, which was under heavy alert, which would be even more troublesome.

Meanwhile, Zead has also sent out requests for support to the Polish Air Force and the German Air Force, but there has been no response. When the Hermes aircraft, equipped with a highly functional sensing backpack, intercepted the radio waves, it seemed that at almost the same time as the new resource area was attacked, the Kiel base in Germany was also attacked.

## Mission 5 Wandering

It seems that there has been an attack, and the air forces of both Poland and Germany are overwhelmed with requests from their own countries.

And so, the four Wanzers we were aboard were marching steadily forward through the mountains of Poland in the deep darkness, relying solely on the reactions of our sensors.

"How far do they plan to walk in the van tour? Tetsuki M, I thought they had a trailer or something waiting,»Hermes's voice growled suspiciously through the headset.

"Well, as long as the van tour over there is operational, we can track its pattern with a detector. But still, do you really think they're going to let an armed van tour cross the border?»"If we head in this direction, we'll end up at the German border,»Zead replied in a rather heavy voice.

"If our guess is correct and the raiding force is in cahoots with the German government, we might be the ones stopped at the border.»"But if we did that, we'd have to admit that we were in on it, which would be a pain, wouldn't it?»Zead responded to Hermes' question after a short pause.

"That alone will only deepen suspicion, but it will not be conclusive evidence. Cases in which investigators who have cast a net overlook the real criminal and catch the pursuer are the result of a very simple mistake or the fact that the person in charge

That's only possible if the person in question is a little slow to understand.»"What's more frightening is being ambushed without any warning,»Latona interjected, sounding a little annoyed.

"Even if the German army doesn't get involved, the assault force surely has plenty of rocket- and missile-equipped Wanzers in reserve, right? If by some chance we miss the ambush, we could be easily annihilated with a single long-range simultaneous attack, without being able to fight back.»"I know that. That's why they're using their high-performance sensor backpacks to carefully probe as they proceed."

When Hermes protested, Latona retorted harshly.

"In that case, stop talking nonsense and focus on your exploration. If you make a mistake, we could all be wiped out in an instant.»"That's why I'm doing my best."

Hermes replied in a sulky voice, and at that moment a question that had been troubling me ever since I began to follow the raiding party suddenly took shape.

"Why did the assault force save the support van tours? Normally, they would send in the high-speed assault force first, and then send in the support attack. Rockets are useless in a melee, but missiles should be fine.



## Mission 5 Wandering

"That's certainly true. Once the explosive shell equipped units had rushed in, the intercepting force would no longer be able to advance to the position of the supporting attack force. In that situation, if they had been supported by missiles from the rear, it would have been a much more unfavorable development."

As Zead agrees, Latona points out.

"Normally, when providing missile support from the rear, at least one Venturer carrying a missile guidance sensor backpack must go ahead. However, this time, it seems that the connector on the back where the backpack would normally be attached was connected to the large launch port, which is why it couldn't be guided.»

"That means that the unit that attacked the German base and the unit that's attacking the new resource area this time have absolutely nothing in common, in terms of equipment or tactics. If the same unit trapped in Germany was conducting both attacks, how could this be possible?»Something was wrong. I had overlooked something.

Thinking this, I was dazzled.»The submarines had withdrawn from Denmark, so the attacking force shouldn't be able to receive reinforcements or supplies. And yet they were using special equipment, like large rockets for assaults, that weren't officially adopted by any military force. **Bazooka** What on earth is going on with the sudden appearance of a unit equipped with explosive shells that is so willing to throw away its equipment? I don't know where the raiding force's home country is, but it seems to me that they are only sending in the necessary forces depending on the situation."

"Germany does not share a direct border with any country outside of E.C.'s territory. Even if the entire German government and military had betrayed E.C., it should be impossible for foreign troops to enter by land,»Zead growled in a confused tone.

"But even so, is it possible for supplies to be sent by air or sea under the current circumstances? Even if Germany deliberately overlooked it, would it be possible for it to pass through undetected by neighboring countries? Common sense tells us that it can't be.»"There's no point in thinking about such questions now,»Latona said firmly, in a typical fashion.

"Anyway, for now, we have no choice but to steadily pursue those fleeing guys. If we can keep pursuing them without losing contact until the transport arrives from HQ, then we'll be able to see victory."

"That's right."

Jaid agreed, and we continued our pursuit in silence for some time.

Soon after, Hermes spoke in a tense tone.

"The assault force has crossed the German border. There are no signs of anything in the vicinity that could be considered a wanzler, helicopter, aircraft, or large vehicle."

"Aren't there any German troops patrolling the border?"

Zead asked, Hermes immediately replied.

"At least, they're not within the range that can be seen with the high-performance sensor backpack. The Keel base was attacked.

## Mission 5 Wandering

They were hit and are now directing all their efforts towards the coast."

"That may be true for the Air Force, but the Army's deployment is not something that can be changed so easily. Five bases have been destroyed, and it's true that there are large holes in the structure, but it's strange that they're not patrolling the borders, especially in times of emergency."

Latona groaned in a tone that clearly indicated she was not happy with the situation, but Zead made a snap decision.»For now, we can assume that they are all there, so we have no choice but to continue our pursuit. Hermes, please continue sensing for anything that has appeared in the surrounding area."

"Yeah, I know."

Hermes replied in an unusually firm tone. Then, after a while, he muttered,»We've reached the German border. There's nothing around... No, several Wanzers have appeared from the north!"

beacon

"From the North? Are you receiving any identification signals?"

Hamiz paused briefly before answering Ged's question.

"Identification signal confirmed. It's a German Wanzer. Belongs to

.....Blauer Nebel !"

« Of all times, should I say? Or maybe they were just waiting for this. Anyway, let's try contacting them."

Glancing bitterly, Zead tuned his radio to the E.C. military general-purpose frequency and called out,»This is Durandal, the E.C. Land New Tactics Research Institute. We are the ones who raided the new resource area in Poland.

We are pursuing an armed Wanzer of unknown affiliation. According to our sensor, there are six Wanzers in question. They have invaded Germany from Poland, and are currently moving 15 kilometers west of our position, heading southwest. We request the German military's cooperation in capturing them. However, the Wanzer unit belonging to Blauer Nebel that appeared from the north made no attempt to respond, and instead continued to move quickly south, approaching. There were eight of them in total.

"What will you do, Zead?"

Hermes asked in an impatient voice, to which Zead replied in a stern tone.

"Anyway, I guess we'll just have to keep pursuing the raiding party."

With that, the Zead crossed the German border and headed west, and at that moment, a bullet from the armor-piercing cannon made a distinctive high-pitched noise as it passed directly above the Zead, a little higher than the Van Tour's head.

"He shot me!"

"Hmph, no need to ask questions."

Dazzling with defiance, the Latona plane turns north.

"What are you going to do, Leader? You'll just get yourself killed if you don't do something.»"It appears that's true. We'll have to brush off the flames that are falling on us.»Saying this, Zead's machine roared towards Blauer Nebel's Ventur, armed with its armor-piercing shell cannon.

## Mission 5 Wandering

At the same time, they launched missiles. Now there was no turning back.

"Let's go, Elsa!"

"yes!"

The Latona took off at full speed, and I immediately followed suit. First and foremost, the target I should aim at is the armor-piercing cannon-equipped machine, commonly known as the sniper, which attacks from long distances with one shot. Although it is inferior in overall destructive power to the explosive cannon, the powerful armor-piercing shells that penetrate the armor of the Ventour destroy the internal mechanisms, so if the computer core, power reactor, or cockpit are shot through, it will be rendered inoperable with one hit.

the way to deal with a Ventour equipped with an armour-piercing shell cannon is to approach as quickly as possible and engage in a melee, just like with a long-range attack aircraft. The Latona machine rushes towards the Blauer Nebel armour-piercing shell cannon-equipped Ventour, which is staggering after being hit by a missile fired by Zead, with the vigour of a carnivorous beast attacking its prey.

A metallic bang rang out as Latona's pile bunker pierced the shotgun arm of the armor-piercing cannon-equipped Wanzer. At the same time, my Wanzer fired a linked attack, firing shotgun shells at the enemy's arm, causing the armor-piercing cannon to explode.

But the next moment, a second Venturer equipped with an armor-piercing cannon, positioned at the rear, shot down Latona's plane.

armor -piercing bullets at the armour body. The Latona machine protected its torso with the shield equipped on its right arm.

However, the shield was pierced with one hit, and sparks and black smoke rose from his arm.

"You!"

Letting out a roar of rage, Latona ran off to close the distance with the armor-piercing cannon-equipped Wanzer. However, several Wanzers jumped out with machine guns and shotguns in both hands to block her path. Furthermore, a large Wanzer equipped with an explosive cannon appeared from behind the armor-piercing cannon-equipped Wanzer and began firing.

"Elsa, take down the enemy plane!"

"yes!"

Latona, realizing that it would be difficult to close in on the rear Venturer equipped with the long-range weapons of explosive shells and armor-piercing shells, jumped into the enemy's vantage point, equipped with two weapons, and, just like in the simulation, slammed a pile bunker into the computer core. Unfortunately, it wasn't able to disable it in one hit, so I fired my machine gun and shotgun at the same time. A gust of black smoke blew out from the hole made by the pile bunker, and the pilot was ejected from the vantage point along with his cockpit.

with no more hesitation, the inoperable Wanzer whose pilot had escaped was hit directly by an explosive cannon shot from long range. Of course, in reality, the attack was probably aimed at Latona's machine and missed, but the inoperable Wanzer that received a direct hit instantly exploded and collapsed.

## Mission 5 Wandering

The Latona quickly jumped down to avoid the explosion, but a second Venturer equipped with a carbine was caught in the explosion as it tried to circle around and attack, nearly falling over on its back, but barely managed to stay standing.

"slow!"

Without giving the off-balance dual-weapon Wanzer time to regain its balance, Latona's unit closed in from the side and plunged a pile bunker into its fuselage. The hit perfectly pierced its computer core, and before I could launch a follow-up attack, the Wanzer was rendered inoperable and the pilot was ejected. I watched as the first pilot to be ejected emerged from the escape device and tried to retreat without armour, but I didn't have time to worry about that now. Changing position so as not to become a target for the explosive shells or armour-piercing shells, I fired my machine gun at the three dual-weapon Wanzers that were approaching one after the other. We were far apart, and since we were firing while moving, I rarely hit any of them, but since this was a diversionary attack I didn't mind.

Then, a missile fired by Zead's unit from behind hits one of the Wanzers equipped with dual weapons. The Wanzer was not put out of action by the missile, but its legs seemed to have sustained damage and its forward speed visibly dropped.

Seeing this, the Latona machine, which was about to charge forward, suddenly dropped back. Certainly, there was no need to approach the Van Tour, whose leg had been damaged, to give it a chance to fire.

No. I followed her lead and retreated while firing my machine gun. The undamaged Wanzer equipped with two weapons returned fire with its machine gun and advanced to close the distance, but then Zead's missiles came charging at us again. The missiles exploded with a thunderous roar, and thick black smoke rose from the joints of the Wanzer that had taken a direct hit.

"now!"

I quickly jumped forward and mowed down the two enemies with my machine gun. Just as I had planned, the Wanzer that had just been hit by the missile exploded, stopping it from moving, and the pilot was ejected and eliminated. Meanwhile, Latona's Wanzer immediately charged forward and attacked the remaining Wanzer with a pile bunker. The dual-weapon Wanzer, damaged by the machine gun, dodged Latona's attack surprisingly quickly, but my Wanzer, which had been moving forward, fired a shotgun in a linked attack. Then the enemy Wanzer...

the rifle armour's attention turned towards me, the Latona machine slammed into my right arm head-on, along with its shield which had been shot through by its armour-piercing cannon.

The blow seemed to have caught the enemy aircraft completely off guard. The force of the blow caused it to lose its balance completely, and it fell to its rear end with a thud. At that point, I mercilessly fired my machine gun and shotgun at it. Suddenly, an explosion rang out a little way away. I looked and saw that the Wanzer, whose leg had been destroyed by Zead's missile earlier, had been hit directly by another missile and was about to collapse. Pazuuka Rifle Arm This meant that only one unit equipped with an explosive shell cannon and one equipped with an armor-piercing shell cannon remained. And the one whose arm had been destroyed first was...



## Mission 5 Wandering

There was a Wanzer wandering around that had lost its weapon after being destroyed, but it was okay to ignore it unless it tried to ram into us. The pilots whose units had been rendered inoperable and ejected didn't seem crazy enough to try and attack the Wanzer with their personal weapons.

And the remaining units equipped with explosive shell cannons and armor-piercing shell cannons advanced side by side. It seemed to be a plan to bring the Zead units behind us within firing range, but of course, I had no intention of letting them do something like that. I closed the distance and attacked.

However, if we approached straight ahead we would only become targets, so both Latona's machine and my Wanzer ran in a zigzag pattern, closing the distance while looking for an opening. The machine equipped with an armor-piercing cannon fired a shot in my direction, but since it was also moving, my aim was poor. It didn't even graze me, and the armor-piercing shell flew away, making a distinctive high-pitched noise.

Suddenly, a Wanzer that had lost an arm came running towards me. It was a nuisance, but depending on how you used it, it could also be a shield. Just as I was thinking that, a Wanzer equipped with an explosive shell cannon came running towards me and started attacking.

"Huh?"

The next moment, I dodged it instantly, and in a sudden flash of ammo, my eyes widened. The explosive shell equipped Wanzer had clearly aimed its fire not at me, but at my ally, a Wanzer that had lost an arm. The Wanzer, hit directly by the powerful explosive shell, was rendered inoperable without a moment's hesitation, and exploded as it flew off the ground.

The next moment, a machine equipped with an armor-piercing cannon took aim at my Wanzer, and although I hadn't intended to be distracted, perhaps my reaction was slow, as the bullet hit the arm equipped with the cannon.

"Tsk!"

Ignoring the red light on the control panel, indicating that some parts are out of operation, I continue to close the distance between me and the enemy unit. It feels like **W has fallen for a trick**, but when fighting a Wanzer equipped with a long-range weapon, you have to prepare to be hit by two bullets while closing the distance. Whether or not that will be a fatal blow is probably a matter of luck, not skill. Moreover, while the two enemy units were attacking me together, Latona's unit was steadily closing the distance, and according to theory... I'm on Latona's side. Certainly, from the common sense of VanTour battles, it's not wrong to prioritize attacking a dual-wielding weapon unit over a melee weapon unit, but they don't know how amazing she is.

Furthermore, Zead's unit advanced and fired a missile. The unit equipped with the armor-piercing cannon received a direct hit, and Latona's unit immediately followed up with an attack. With one of my **arms** destroyed, my Wanzer's balance was off, and I couldn't get within range of the shotgun. However, Latona's arm, which was equipped with a shield, shouldn't be functioning properly either, so this was all a matter of skill.

Rifle Armor Rifle Latona machine pierces the arm of the armor-piercing shell cannon equipped machine, destroying the weapon. That was fine, but then the explosive shell cannon equipped machine fires at almost point-blank range. The explosive shells

## Mission 5 Wandering

As a result, both the armor-piercing cannon-equipped aircraft and the Latona aircraft were blown away, and the pilot of the armor-piercing cannon-equipped aircraft was ejected.

"What a guy! He has no qualms about shooting his comrades?"

Even though there was an escape device and the risk to life was low, this type of tactic went against the code of honor of a Wanzer pilot. In fact, I absolutely did not want to fight alongside such a guy. Indignantly, I closed the distance and fired my shotgun at the explosive shell-equipped Wanzer.

However, this Venturer is so big that it has thick armor, and it doesn't even waver from a single shot from a shotgun. Firing the machine gun at the same time might have some effect, but the arm doesn't react at all.

Then, the enemy plane re-aimed its explosive shell cannon and aimed at me. Of course, I had no obligation to just let myself be shot at while being targeted, so I dodged the tip of the explosive shell cannon while firing my shotgun. Bazooka Rifle

If they get stuck, it becomes even more difficult to hit targets with long-range explosive shells or armor-piercing shells.

Then the Zead unit fired missiles at it, damaging the armor of the large Wanzer here and there.

### Bazooka

Smoke began to rise from the shells. I, too, was busy trying to avoid the barrel of the explosive shell cannon, which was swinging back and forth, and without even aiming properly, I just kept firing my shotgun. Then, the Latona machine somehow managed to get up and rammed into the enemy with all its might, slamming its pile bunker into the enemy.

At that moment, there was a loud explosion, and black smoke and flames came out of the hole the pile bunker had made.

fire with great force. Surely it wasn't going to self-destruct? I thought to myself, turning pale for a moment, but the flames and smoke that spewed out quickly died down, and then the pilot was ejected.

"Somehow, it seems that the matter has been resolved."

Latona's voice, sounding tired after all, came from the headset. important thing was that the raiding force managed to escape. Damn, that's impossible.»"There's no other way. Let's ask the people of Blauer Nebel why they attacked us and allowed the raiding force to escape."

Saying this, I aimed the shotgun at the escape device that had been launched from the large Wanzer and made a declaration using the external megaphone.

"Do you hear me? If you run away I'll shoot you. I'm not threatening you. I've taken your captain's example and decided not to make empty threats."

"So, what should we do?"

Zead groaned, sounding lost for words.

"We can't stay here forever, but if the Germans don't respond to our calls, there's nothing we can do."

"I agree"

## Mission 5 Wandering

Hermes's reply was not as cheerful as usual. After our unwilling battle with Blauer Nebel, we were at a complete stalemate.

First of all, the Wanzer was badly damaged. Zead's and Hermes' were unscathed, but the arm equipped with the machine gun on my Wanzer machine gun arm was inoperable. Latona's right arm, which was equipped with a shield, had been completely blown off, and its legs had sustained heavy damage. Latona's legs were in particularly serious condition, and it would not be surprising if it became unable to walk at any time. Hermes' opinion was that the only way to repair it was to replace the leg parts entirely, but of course, in the current situation, there was no way I was carrying around spare leg parts.

And the Polish new resource area raiding force that we had been pursuing had completely disappeared from the effective range of the Hermes' high-performance detector. We should resume the pursuit, but we can't move the Latona carelessly, and if we leave it behind, its fighting power will be reduced by half. Furthermore, there is also the problem of what to do with the Blauer Nebel pilots that we had taken prisoner. Bazooka

The pilot of the Blauer Nebel unit was a pilot of a large Wanzer equipped with an explosive shell cannon. The red -haired pilot had boyish features that were hard to imagine given his reckless tactics that would casually catch allies in the crossfire. He introduced himself as Captain Drantz, and responded to Zead's questioning with a sulky look on his face, but didn't say anything that would be useful to us.

According to Drants, they were patrolling the Polish border when they spotted a suspicious armed van.

Upon discovering them, they asked who they were and ordered them to leave, but there was no response. They fired warning shots, which were returned with missiles, so they were forced to engage in combat. They did not see the assault force that was supposed to have been there before, nor did they receive any warning from Durandal's side. If they had any doubts, they were told, as if to be defiant, that the escape device had communication records so they could check them as much as they wanted, which left them with no choice. Of course, Hermes had checked Drants' communication records,

#### Data Records

However, these types of electronic records can easily be forged by anyone with a certain amount of knowledge and skill, so they are of no use in determining whether what he is saying is true or false.

"It's unusual for our declaration to go unheeded by anyone on the other side, but I wouldn't say it's impossible. We don't use the E.C. military general -purpose frequency all the time, after all."

With that, Hermes sighed.

"Either way, it's hard to prove that Blauer Nebel was intentionally sabotaging us... Snack?"

"what up?"

Zead asked, and Hermes suddenly replied in an excited voice.

"Yes! A transport plane has arrived from Durandal HQ! Bosch is piloting it, and it looks like it's already approaching !"

## Mission 5 Wandering

"Bosch?"

I asked, hearing the name for the first time, and Zead immediately explained.

"Bosch is an Arrow who went to Iceland. That's No. 3's real name. Apparently, as soon as he returned to HQ, he piloted a transport plane and rushed over."

Saying that, Zead continued with a wry smile.

"Well, if the transport plane arrives, we'll at least be able to replace the VanTour's parts.»After having the Blauer Nebel pilots board the transport plane that had made a vertical landing and shoving them into a room that could be locked from the outside, I placed the damaged VanTour in the hangar. Then, when I got out of the Wanzer with him and removed my headset, I saw a strange man standing there with Zead, Latona, and Hamiz.

He appears to be in his mid-thirties. A small man, slightly shorter than Latona, with a gentle appearance but also a somewhat carefree and friendly air about him. He doesn't seem like a bad person, but to be honest, he doesn't look very impressive. He is wearing a Durandal Wanzer pilot uniform, but looks more like an ordinary mechanic or engineer than a soldier. However, he is probably a former German soldier and a capable Durandal corps member, who Zead described as being well-informed and highly capable in information analysis, and would definitely be useful if he was there. Looks can be deceptive.

"A wise man hides his claws,»I coughed silently.

Elsa Eliane, Alo 16.»

"Arrow 3, I'm Dieter Bosch. I don't really like using my first name, so I'd prefer if you called me Bosch."

asked him in a drawn-out tone.

"So, what are we going to do now?"

"First, Arrow»I'll get the 2 and Arrow 6 Van Tours back in perfect condition. If we get Hermes to replace the parts, it shouldn't take that long,»Zead replied, frowning slightly.

"After that, we'll have no choice but to hand the Blauer Nebel guys over to the German army. There's no way we can bring them back to Durandal HQ or the E.C. Assembly.

Besides, we can't search Germany endlessly for the escaped raiding force. I can't say it's all of them, but some of the German government and the German army are probably secretly connected to the raiding force. If we stayed there too long, they would surely find some excuse and kick us out.»"Hmm."

Bosch snorted lightly and walked over to the monitor, bringing up a map.



## Mission 5 Wandering

«Hermes, approximately where were the raiding party when they moved out of range of the advanced detectors?"

"Um, it's around here. From here, it moved away in a southwesterly direction."

Saying this, Hermes pointed to a spot on the map.

Bosch then nodded slightly.

"I see. In that case, there is still a possibility that we can track down their footsteps. It is just a possibility, though."

"What is the possibility of that?"

When I asked enthusiastically, responded slowly.

"The direction they were moving is the Dresden Air Base. The radar there, or the air patrol planes taking off and landing, may have picked up the moving Wanzers. If we compare that with the data Hermes obtained from the new resource areas in Poland, we'll immediately know whether it's an assault force or not.»"However, no matter how many times we called while we were moving, there was no response from Dresden Air Base. So even if we asked to see the radar or air patrol plane surveillance records, I don't think they'd cooperate."

When Jido pointed this out, Bosch smiled.

even if a request for cooperation was sent from an unknown Wanzer, the army base was destroyed.

It's because they were just destroyed. They'll likely be wary that it might be a trap and won't even respond. But if a plane that has already been declared a transport belonging to the E.C. Land New Tactical Research Institute Durandal requests to land in order to hand over the Blauer Nebel soldiers, will they still pretend not to know anything? I think they'll at least be allowed to land and hand over the personnel. And once we get in, a comrade from Huffman who struggled with us is working as a data analyst at the Dresden Air Base. If we ask him, he'll probably be able to show us the data in secret.»«Of course, that would be appreciated!"

cried Hermes, clapping her hands.

"Well then, let's head to Dresden base right away!"

«But if the assault force's van tours had stopped working while Blauer Nebel was holding us back and were housed in trailers or something, wouldn't they be able to be detected even if they were passing by the Dresden base?"

Latona's skeptical response.

"So it's just a possibility. If it doesn't work, it's just a given. Let's just give it a try."

"That's certainly true."

Latona nodded with an understanding look.

I see, it may be rude to say that Bosch is not what he seems, but...

## Mission 5 Wandering

ordinary person, I thought. Even though he had only just arrived at the scene, he accurately grasped the situation, immediately drew out a possible solution, and easily convinced the Durandal members, who were all tricky characters.

"Well then, let's go."

Bosch declared nonchalantly and headed for the cockpit.

"How about it? Can you send me the data?"

Bosch slowly waved one hand at Hermes who asked enthusiastically.»Yes, don't panic. No matter how willing my comrades are to listen to my request, the German Air Force is currently on high alert. There's no way they're going to leak classified data to the outside that easily.»"That's right. If it were to be exposed, there'd be no doubt a court-martial.»When I nodded, Hermes frowned in slight irritation.

"I know that too. But the more time passes, the less chance we have of chasing the raiding force. Even if you tell me not to panic, it's impossible.»"I understand how you feel, but panicking won't do you any good,»Bosch replied calmly, operating the portable communication device in his hand. The transport plane had already landed at the Dresden base airfield, but instead of using the communication device installed on the transport plane, he was using his own personal

He is in contact with a person he calls a comrade through a mobile communication device owned by a human. Moreover, he does not speak to him directly, but instead exchanges what appear to be emails, so unless Bosch explains it, it is unclear whether the matter has progressed with Hermes.

Incidentally, Zead and Latona were meeting with the base commander to hand over the Blauer Nebel pilots. Just as Bosch had predicted, the Dresden base commander agreed to the handover of the Blauer Nebel pilots and only allowed the Durandal transport plane to land within the base, but it was clear from the communication requesting the landing that he was being very bothersome and wanted them to leave as soon as their business was over. At that rate, they would definitely be turned away if they directly asked for cooperation, and even if they tried to drag things out, it didn't seem like they would be able to buy much time.

"Okay, looks like we have an answer. Let's see...: " "

Bosch glanced calmly at the small display screen of his mobile phone. To an outsider, it looked like the kind of unsolicited sales email commonly known as spam that is often sent to personal mobile phones, but it seemed that he and his comrades were mixing encrypted information into the email and using it for secret communication.

"Well ....., it seems it's not possible to leak the data to the outside. However, if you give us the data to check, we can compare it and let you know the results. So, Hermes, I'm going to give you the data on the Van Tours that attacked the new resource areas in Poland.

## Mission 5 Wandering

Can I give it to you?"

"If there's no other way, then I guess there's no other way. I'd actually prefer to check it myself.»Hermes nodded reluctantly, and Bosch grinned in response.

"Sorry. Well, give me the data then. I'll give them a copy.»"Okay."

Without further ado, Hermes operated the terminal on the transport plane to retrieve the data. Bosch then took over from Hermes, operating the terminal with a practiced look, and sending the data using his own portable communication device. I'm not completely incapable of using computers, but it seems that their skill level is far above mine.

"Now, all that's left is to wait for the results."

Bosch stretches lightly, as if he has just finished a job.

So I asked him about something that had been bothering me.

"Um, you said that you and your comrades struggled together at Huffman, but did you take part in the Huffman Campaign?"

PMO

"Yeah, I was deployed as a peacekeeper for the Hengchun Peacekeeping Organization. It was a horrible experience,»Bosch replied with a sigh. His expression said he didn't want to even remember it, so I quickly apologized.

"Oh, did I bring up something unpleasant? I'm sorry.»"No, don't worry about it. Besides, you can talk to me normally. We're both members of Durandal after all.»

Bosch said with a wry smile and began to speak slowly.

when I headed to Huffman Island. The German military's use of Wanzers was considered advanced among the E.C. nations, but compared to the U.S.N and O.C.U. armies that had been forged through actual combat, it was clearly lagging behind. I thought I'd use this opportunity to see new tactics for myself, and hopefully learn some. However, when I got to Huffman Island, I found that the peacekeeping forces' main mission was, without question, to hunt down guerrillas. Well, even though they were guerrillas, they were using fairly high-performance Wanzers, and Oceana Welcome, we did not encounter them, but veteran mercenaries from the O.C.U. army were among the participants, and they were a formidable opponent, even for the Zafra army, which was the core of the peacekeeping forces, and they were a tough opponent. For that reason, guerrilla hunting was carried out thoroughly, and horrific incidents involving ordinary civilians were frequent. In fact, I would n't dare say this in front of Latona, but the Zafra army at that time did things that made you wonder how they were keeping the peace, and it was a routine occurrence. Furthermore, we, the contingent from E.C., were assigned to support the Zafra forces, and were forced to do only menial tasks, such as clearing the way for scouts, cleaning up after the enemy, and acting as diversionary tactics for the EE. The number of casualties was unusually high for a Vantour battle, and transport planes and supply units were also attacked. In guerrilla warfare, regular armies often fought each other,

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There's no such thing as morality or tacit understanding like there is in battle."

Saying that, Botsushu sighed deeply.

"And after all that we've been through, it's hard not to be upset when it's revealed that the Second Huffman Conflict was a collusion war between U.S.N and O.C.U., who were supposed to be parties to the war, and even ZAFTRA, and that justice was on the side of the guerrillas. When most Wanzer pilots who were involved in guerrilla hunting, both in the German and British armies, found out the truth about the Huffman Conflict, they couldn't bear it and left the military. I was one of them, but some were so worried that they suffered mental breakdowns. I consider myself one of the lucky ones, because I'm still driving a Wanzer even after leaving the military.»

"...I'm sorry for reminding you after all."

When I apologized, Bosch chuckled again.

"Well, it's easier to talk about these experiences. Besides, this incident somehow reminded me of my experience at Huffman. The tactics of ambush and annihilation without question, and the Van Tours choosing to commit suicide rather than be taken prisoner."

"So you mean uncompromising guerrilla warfare?"

In response to Hermes' question, Botsushu frowned slightly and tilted his head.

"Is that so? No, more likely, there is some big conspiracy going on behind the scenes, and they're just trying to hide it.

It feels like a brutal battle. It's not a simple terrorist or guerrilla war."

"Hmm, I see."

Just as Hermes groaned in confusion, Bosch's portable communicator emitted a receiving tone.

"Oh, here it comes."

"That was unexpectedly quick."

Hermes seemed surprised by this, and Bosch responded with a wry smile while operating his portable communication device.

"Yes, that's true. The longer it takes, the greater the risk of it being revealed."

"Oh, I see"

But if that's the case, surely they won't be able to make a sufficient match, or so she thought, **glaring at** the dimly lit Hermes. Bosch transferred the data he had received from the portable communication device to the transport plane's computer, and operated the terminal to decode it. And, as soon as he had read the data, it seemed to me that Bosch's expression became a little grim.

"We'll just have to let Zead decide how to deal with this."

"what's up?"

Hermes asked, Bosch explained with a complicated look on his face.

"The results of the comparison are as follows:



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the Wanzer, which we believe to be an assault force, moves west-southwest for a while from the point where we lost sight of it, but stops and disappears when it reaches the main road. It's likely that the Wanzer was loaded onto a waiting trailer and deactivated. Up to that point, that's as we would expect, but then the reaction resumed in an unexpected place."

"An incredible place?"

Hermes's question and mine happened to overlap, and Bosch answered succinctly.

"It's an undisclosed German Army base. The data notes that it is used by Blauer Nebel."

"Well then, I guess...»

I hesitated for a moment and swallowed the words that were about to come out of my mouth. Bosch's expression had always been rather blank, but suddenly, a shadow of what could be described as sadness appeared.

But Hermes, unlike me, did not hesitate.

"Frau, Fu-Bell is hiding the raiding party. So they were part of it after all."

"I can't help but come to that conclusion. I wonder if Commander Wagner is aware of it, or if he has no knowledge of it... No, no matter what the situation, Wagner is neither tolerant nor stupid enough to not notice when his subordinates do as they please."

Bosch looked dazzled, almost as if talking to himself. Then Hermes asked in surprise.

"Do you know Wagner? Personally?"

"We were in the same year at the military academy. He enrolled right after graduating from high school, but I joined the military after taking a long detour to college, so there's quite an age difference between us."

Bosch said, sighing.

"Wagner has always been a quiet and excellent guy, even as an officer cadet, but despite his usual cold-heartedness he has a strangely extreme side, and people say it's hard to know what he's thinking. But I never would have imagined he'd be teaming up with people who would mercilessly annihilate an army base. «"But facts are facts. Let's go to that undisclosed base right away and get irrefutable evidence !"

an enraged Hermes with a difficult expression.

"Even if we showed up, I don't think Wagner would readily admit his guilt. If his personality hasn't changed, it's only natural that we'd be turned away, and it's even possible that they'd resort to force.

No, at worst, this reaction could be a trap to lure us out. There's no way Wagner wouldn't have guessed that we were in Poland and had learned the operation patterns from the Wanzers of the raiding forces. Despite that, the fact that they were ostentatiously operating the Wanzers and showing a reaction was just plain stupid.

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"But that doesn't mean we can just leave it alone, right?" I said in an accusatory tone, and Bosch tilted his head.

"I wonder. I think it would be a good idea to hold back and slowly investigate the situation, but it's also possible that Wagner's plan is to make us think that.

Either way, the final decision on how to deal with this will not be made by us, but by our leader, Zead.»

Just as Bosch was about to reply, Zead's corpse came out of the transport plane's communication system.

"It's me. The Blauer Nebel group has been handed over, but as expected, all other requests for cooperation have been refused. The base commander wants you to leave the Dresden base as soon as possible, and if possible, to leave Germany altogether. Has there been any progress on that front?»"There has been progress. Although things have become a little complicated."

Bosch responded in a somewhat firm tone.

"I'll tell you more about it on the plane."

"There was a reaction on the detector. He's here after all."

Hermes reported in a slightly subdued voice. Zead responded calmly.»I see. Then, while we were exploring in a transport plane, by chance we got the same reaction from the Ventour as the raiding force.

The story goes that he saw it.

Now we can visit the Blauer Nebel base without putting Bosch's friends at risk.»"However, I think the possibility of it being a trap has increased even more. It seems strange no matter how you look at it, that they have kept the Van Tour hidden within the base operating until now.»Bosch pointed this out, and Zead responded in a calm tone.

"No, you shouldn't think that. At this point, we don't know that the location where this Wanzer's reaction came from is a secret German military base, or that Blauer Nebel is using it. We simply discovered a reaction that seemed to be from a Wanzer that had attacked a new resource area in Poland, where repairs were being made at the hideout, and decided to quickly step in. That's all there is to it.»"Indeed, the fact that we received the data from the Dresden base is a top secret matter that must never be leaked to anyone. We need to act as if it never happened.»Hermes nodded, and Latona groaned in shock.

"But I'm not really impressed with you going out of your way to jump into something that's likely to be a trap.»"That's true, but that doesn't mean we can just retreat and avoid it,»Zead replied with a wry smile.

"If they were going to back down now to avoid trouble, why would they have flew around to Denmark and Poland in the first place?"

## Mission 5 Wandering

"Well, I thought maybe you'd say a few words.»

Latona shrugged as if there was nothing she could do about it. «Leader, this atmosphere reminds me of when I was in the British Special Forces. It's lively, which is nice, but it also feels a little dangerous."

"...In other words, the Grim Reaper Zead has been resurrected."

Zead groaned, frowning as expected.

「Understood. Let's act with caution. In order for Durandal to survive, we must pursue results, but putting the lives of our members at risk would be counterproductive.

We're not an army."

Just as Zead spoke, as if to admonish himself, the transport plane's communication device emitted a receiving sound.

"This is the German Army. We are warning you to any unknown aircraft. The airspace you are about to invade is under special military occupation and you may not enter without prior authorization. Change direction immediately and leave."

"This is the Durandal, the E.C. Land Tactical Research Institute. We are pursuing an armed vanguard of unknown affiliation that has attacked a new resource area in Poland."

In response to the standard warning, Zead raised his voice and spoke confidently.

we observed an operational response from a Venture that matched the armed Venture in question.

Detection has been confirmed. We will now begin an emergency search, and request the cooperation of the German Army.»"What a stupid thing to say! This is a closed German Army base! There's no way such a strange Wanzer could be here!"

Zead remained calm as he spoke to the person who had suddenly become emotional.

"However, it is true that there is a reaction on the sensors. Once we confirm the relevant Van Tour, our need will be satisfied. We would appreciate your cooperation in the search.»"No! If you violate our specially occupied airspace any further, we will attack!»The person on the other end shouted loudly, but Zead continued on without changing his tone.

"If they fail to cooperate, we regret to inform you that we will be forced to carry out a compulsory investigation using the powers granted to us by the E.C. Council.

If you have any complaints, please submit your complaint directly to the E.C. Council.»«Don't mess with me! Do you really want to be shot down?»Ignoring the person shouting, Zead looked around at the group and announced.

Drop Sensor Koko»Perform an airborne drop and secure any Wanzers that are responding to the sensors. Hermes, stay on the transport and keep an eye on them to make sure they don't escape. If they attack from the ground, increase your altitude to avoid them."

"Eh? I'm the one staying home alone?"

## Mission 5 Wandering

the puzzled Hermes.

"I'm not as good at piloting a plane as you are. I can only just about fly it. And to be honest, I'm not confident in assisting an airborne landing either."

"Oh, I see. That's it."

Hermes reluctantly nodded, and Zead asked Bosch.

Did you bring your Wanzer? If not, I'll have to use Hermes' Giza Hybrid."

prototype

I brought the Tatoo prototype that was tested in Iceland with me,»Botusch said with a small laugh.

Arm **Binsho**

"The aiming performance of its arms is not the best, but its agility easily surpasses that of a Stoke. If it's just about dodging enemy attacks, this is the best Wanzer in the world."

"What?! The treasured possession of the Toroh Corporation, the Lightning-Speed Tattoo? They're finally willing to offer the item to Durandal!"

Hermes raised a sudden and abrupt command, but Zead immediately interrupted.

"We can discuss that later. Right now, we need to get our operation underway."

"Is that Blauer Nebel's secret base?"

Looking out over what could only be an ancient castle towering high in the steep mountains, Zead glared at the sight, a little astonished.

"I don't know whose hobby it is, but do you think you're some medieval castle lord or knight by holeing yourself up in a place like that?"

it's a base that was remodeled from the original Castle Aoki."

Bosch responded with a wry smile.

"I agree that they are subservient. However, it's also true that they are difficult to attack."

"There's a gun mount. It could be a machine gun, a rocket launcher, or a missile launcher. Either way, it's going to be extremely troublesome,»Latona growled in a sulky mood. Bosch then calmly replied.

"By coincidence, there are some heat-resistant sheets in the backpack that my Van Tour is equipped with.

that gun was a rocket launcher or a grenade launcher, it would be useful."

"That's appreciated. Please give it to me right away."

Following Zead's instructions, Bosch took out a heat-resistant sheet from the VanTour's backpack. When he covered the VanTour with this, it slowed it down a little, but it became much more resistant to the rocket artillery and grenade launchers that rained flames down from above.

"But what if that gun was a machine gun or an armor-piercing gun?"



## Mission 5 Wandering

"When that happens, all you have to do is take the seat off. It takes some effort to put it on, but it takes just a moment to take it off."

Bosch answered my question as if it were a matter of course. However, I realized that even such a small thing would be thought of differently by someone who had been through the carnage of real combat. Even though it was just a sheet, the act of taking off equipment once it had been put on was something that a pilot who had only experience in properly staged exercises and mock battles would hardly think of. Then, as our four **Wanzers equipped with** heat-resistant sheets advanced, a loud voice rang out over the loudspeaker from the direction of Kojo Base.

"Attention trespassers calling themselves Durandal. You are trespassing on the grounds of a secret German Army base. If you do not leave immediately, we will remove you by force."

"Is this voice Wagner?"

Bosch groaned softly, and Zead responded through the external loudspeaker.

With the authority granted to us by the E.C. **Assembly**, we at Durandal are pursuing an armed Wanzer of unknown affiliation that has attacked a new resource-rich area in Poland. We are not sure how this happened, but we have detected an operational Wanzer within your base that matches the armed Wanzer in question. In order to solve this mysterious phenomenon, we will enter your base and identify the Wanzer in question. We would like the German Army to cooperate as soon as possible."

"Enough with your nonsense. The thing you were ordered to investigate by the E.C. Congress was the attack on the B.I. military base. I don't know what happened in Poland, but are you trying to justify trespassing by arbitrarily expanding your authority? I'll let you off the hook for now. Get out of here!»A voice that seemed to be Major Wagner's coldly and mercilessly declared. But Zead was not giving in.

"We just want to confirm the strange reaction of the van tour. If you have nothing to be ashamed of, why are you so stubborn and hiding it?

had done nothing wrong and that you would rather have the matter settled in a public forum, and that if you were dissatisfied with the way things were being handled, you were free to appeal to the E.C. Summit or the British Prime Minister. Now I would like to echo those words back to you.

"If you are dissatisfied with the results of our investigation, feel free to appeal to the E.C. Summit or the German Chancellor. We have done nothing wrong, and would rather have this all settled in a public forum. However, we will do whatever it takes to confirm that the Wanzers are reacting in the same way as the assault force.»

"Appealing to force, you say? After you were lucky enough to defeat Drants' patrol, you're a group of amateurs and dropouts who are so arrogant that you think you can force us, Blauer Nebel, into submission!»

## Mission 5 Wandering

Suddenly Wagner's voice took on a hot tone of indignation.

If you want to find out what this strange-reacting Van Tour is, you'll have to rush over to where it is. Of course, I won't show you any mercy.»«It's unfortunate that we couldn't get your cooperation.»

I replied sarcastically, and then Jid commanded us.

"All aircraft, charge!"

"Hatsu, you fools!"

Wagner's cry, the guns at the castle base began firing. The shells were fired at a high angle, bursting in the air and raining flames over a wide area. It was a grenade cannon.

"Wow!"

a Strike or Tatoo is, it is impossible to avoid the flame attacks of a grenade launcher that rain down over a wide area. Even if they have some protection from heat-resistant sheets, if they are mercilessly bombarded with flames from above, they will inevitably take damage.

However, just because we were afraid of the grenade launcher didn't mean we could just scatter. At the very least, Latona and my Wanzers would lose a great deal of combat power if we weren't within range to maintain our link. And from up ahead, several Blauer Nebel Wanzers were swarming out to intercept.

"Let's make this a melee! If allies and enemies are mixed together, the grenade cannon will be useless!»Latona ordered, charging into the enemy ranks. Of course, I immediately followed suit. The Blauer Nebel Wanzers all fired their machine guns at once, but Latona's machine gun moved brilliantly to avoid most of them, and what she couldn't avoid, she blocked with the shield on her right arm. Once we closed the distance, the enemy couldn't fire easily because there was a risk of friendly fire. Well, there was a possibility that the enemy would be like Blauer Nebel and Drants, who are famous for their ruthlessness, and would shoot at their allies, so we couldn't let our guard down, but in fact, the number of hits we took after the close-quarters battle was visibly reduced. On the other hand, if I left it to the automatic firing of the link system, there was absolutely no way that I would fire at Latona's machine. Zead's and Bosch's machines were a little further back, so there was almost no need to worry about friendly fire.

With a bang, Latona's unit slammed its pile bunker into the enemy unit, while at the same time my Wanzer automatically fired its shotgun. The corridors of the Kojo base were extremely narrow by common standards for a military base that uses Vantours, barely wide enough for two Vantours to pass each other. Normally, the defenders would have the advantage in a place like this, but this time, the invaders were in the minority, and Latona, who boasts invincible strength in close combat, was leading the charge. The Browne I Bell side also sent out several Vantours equipped with melee weapons, but far from taking down Latona's unit, they were unable to even stop its advance, and were thwarted by a hail of bullets from my unit following behind.



"If we keep going like this, we might be able to get inside the base pretty quickly [redacted]."

as I stepped over the Venturer, which had become inoperable and the pilot had escaped, following Latona's plane. If we could penetrate the base, it would be even more difficult for the defenders to use guns and explosives, giving the invaders an advantage. There was a possibility that traps had been set up inside the base, but even Wagner would not be able to use traps with enough destructive power to blow up their own base.

Just as I was thinking that, a Wanzer equipped with melee weapons jumped out from a narrow passage to the side, and attacked Latona's unit. However, Latona's unit easily dodged the attack, and in return accurately smashed its pile bunker into its torso. At the same time, my unit fired a shotgun as Link's automatic attack, easily thwarting the new Wanzer, and its pilot was ejected. But at that moment, what sounded like Hermes' scream came from the headset.»They've stopped responding! The Wanzers' assault force have suddenly stopped responding!»"Didn't they stop working?"

In response to Zead's question, Hermes, who was aboard the transport plane in the sky, quickly replied,»No, if it could detect it at this distance, even if it was simply stopped operating, it would be idling and there should be a weak reaction for a while!

This sudden loss of reaction can only be interpreted as a Wanzer itself !

## Mission 5 Wandering

«..... broke?"

I hear Latona's dazzling eyes. Perhaps, at that moment, she and I were looking at the same thing. The fallen van tour that had just been thwarted.

just destroyed one of the attacking Wantours, but this is Brown, a non-bell Wanzer. It's not one of the assault forces."

«.....:So you fell for the deception?"

Bosch glared slightly, but then Zead issued an order in a firm voice. "That may be so, but it may not be. It's possible that we were doing surprisingly well, so Wagner got impatient and disposed of the Van Tours inside the base.

We'll continue the investigation until we can confirm that. However, we need to secure the remains of the Wanzer we just defeated just to be safe."

"I'll take that role. Latona, Elsa, and the leader, please continue to charge into the base."

Bosch responded immediately, but before Zead could reply, a communication that sounded like a forced interrupt came over the headset.

"To all our soldiers and the foreign troops calling themselves Durandal, cease hostilities immediately ! We are the German Military Police! If you do not cease hostilities, no matter which side you are on,

If you do so, you will be considered hostile to us and all German forces! I repeat! To all our soldiers and foreign forces calling themselves Durandal! Immediately [redacted].»"The Gendarmerie is intervening. That was unexpectedly quick."

Sewing through the shouts of the forced interrupt communication, Zead was dazzling in a calm manner.

"In that case, either way, the fight with Blauer Nebel will have to wait."

"...Who won?"

Hermes asked with a sigh, to which Zead replied with a wry smile.

"Since neither of them managed to knock the other out, the decision will be based on time. Ask the referee what the decision will be."

"..: The referee, right?"

Latona was dazzled, and her Wanzer aimed its eye camera at the sky.

More than ten armed helicopters were in formation in the sky, preparing to descend to the ground.



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Restart

MISSION 6

"In the end, both parties in the fight are to blame.»

I glanced over at the official notice from the E.C. Council displayed on Monitor 1's screen and sighed in daze.

of the Wanzers or shoes that had been used to attack the new resource areas in Poland were found at the Blauer Nebel base. The German military police thoroughly searched every area of the base in our presence, but there was no sign of any Wanzers having been disposed of apart from those that had been destroyed when we entered.

This raises the strong suspicion that the Wanzer we destroyed just before the Military Police arrived was a camouflage whose operating pattern resembled that of the assault force's machines, but unfortunately, inoperable Wanzers are designed to automatically erase all data to prevent them falling into enemy hands and having secrets stolen. No matter how many machines remain, it would be nearly impossible to trace them back to see if they were transmitting camouflage patterns.

the sensor detected a Venturer with a suspicious operating pattern at the Blauer Nebel base.

The only evidence we had was the sensor data remaining on our transport aircraft.

## Mission 6 Restart

Since evidence can be fabricated at will, it cannot be accepted as objective evidence. And, naturally, the German government vehemently criticized Durandal at the E.C. parliament, arguing that such a lawless armed organization should be disbanded immediately. However, the Polish government, which had previously been pro-German, began to directly criticize Blauer Nebel, saying that he suspected that Blauer Nebel had intentionally let the troops that attacked the new resource areas in Poland escape, causing a great turmoil in the parliament. For the time being, it was decided that an investigation would be conducted, mainly by the Polish military, regarding the attack on the new resource areas in Poland, separate from the attack on the German military base, and that the German government and military would fully cooperate in clarifying the facts, and it was decided that disciplinary action against Durandal and Blauer Nebel would be discussed again once the facts had been clarified.

So, although Durandal will not be punished for the time being, the order to investigate the German military base attack has been revoked as it was deemed inappropriate given the circumstances, and he has not been given the authority to investigate the attack on the new resource area in Poland. In short, if Durandal gets involved, the situation will become complicated, so he should stand down. Meanwhile, the German government has been forced to transfer the investigation into the German military base attack from Blauer Nebel, who is under suspicion, to a joint special investigation unit made up of the German Army, Navy, and Air Force Gendarmerie. Apparently, Blauer Nebel was supposed to

be investigating near the Kiel naval base where the attack occurred, but in reality, under the command of its commander, Major Wagner, they had directed most of their forces to an undisclosed old castle base and near the Polish border, and not only the Polish government and military were left wondering why they were in such a place.

It seems that even the German Army Gendarmerie, which is supposed to be their own party, is raising suspicions. However, the real intention of the E.C. Congress seems to be that, whatever the truth of the situation, they do not want Germany and Poland to be at odds with each other in the emergency when the U.S.N. fleet is about to enter the Atlantic. An attack on a German inland base will not have much impact on the defense power of the E.C. itself, and an attack on a new resource area in Poland is a serious matter for the E.C. as a whole in the long run, but as long as there are stockpiles of resources, it does not mean that the E.C. army will be unable to move right away. On the other hand, the Iberia Megafloat and the U.S.N. fleet eyeing Madeira Island are a major immediate threat. The E.C. Congress was called into an emergency meeting mainly to make the necessary decisions to move the E.C. combined fleet against the U.S.N. fleet, and it seems that they have no intention of taking any action against the two attacks beyond waiting for local investigations.

"I know the USN fleet is scary, but can we really wage war with armed Wanzer units infiltrating E.C. space?"

one The U.S.N. government must have thought the same, and therefore saw the opportunity to send out a fleet. Besides, in what world would there be such a forceful and ridiculous reason to go to war as to get angry and send combat troops just because the German government issued a statement of condemnation?

Seriously, if the true identity of the attacking force is the U.S.S. military, then it is an unforgivable and heinous act of aggression, but if not, then it is nothing but a despicable act of thieving in an emergency."

## Mission 6 Restart

Hermes growled in genuine annoyance.

If the US - S - N fleet really attacked the Iberia Megafloat or Madeira, If that happens, I will seriously abandon U.S.N and defect to E.C.

Although, I don't know if they'll accept you asylum easily.»"I hope that doesn't happen, but if it does, I think Jido will do everything in his power to support you in getting asylum. Of course, I don't know what I can do either, but I'll definitely do what I can."

When I told her, Hermes suddenly broke into a shy smile.

"Thank you. I'm glad to hear that."

Hermes, who was small and dazzled by Tsukasa, perhaps tried to hide her embarrassment by scratching her head and continuing speaking quickly.

"Well, in order to be accepted as an asylum seeker, I first need to prove to E.C. that I am a valuable asset. To do that, I need to work hard with Durandal and achieve good results."

"What kind of work are you doing now? If there's anything I can help you with, I'd like to help out and learn at the same time."

Anyway, Zead has taken his vacation early, so I have nothing to do and I'm bored, I thought.

I'll add without saying it. Immediately after the E.C. Congress notified me that they were revoking the order to investigate the German base attack, Zead said with a bitter smile that it would be best to cool down a bit, then he took a vacation and disappeared somewhere. As a result, I have no work to do for the time being.

Hermes responded by tilting her head slightly.

"That's right. As a result of this recent incident, various companies have started delivering high-performance Wanzers to Durandal that they had been holding back on until now. Right now we are in the process of checking the data, but by tomorrow we will be able to actually use several of the units, so I think we will have Elsa pilot them and report back on how they feel."

"Eh? Is Durandal being evaluated highly by companies because of this incident?"

When I asked in surprise, Hermes explained with a proud smile.

"Yes, that's right. They had engaged in combat with the Blauer Nebel, known as the most elite of the German army, and despite being clearly outnumbered, they had completely defeated a patrol and had come very close to infiltrating the base.

Up until now, the entrepreneurs had thought of Durandal as nothing more than a group of freelance test pilots, but now that it's this strong in actual combat, they've decided that being recognized there will add credibility to their company's Wanzers."

## Mission 6 Restart

"Oh, so that's it. ... "

When Zead disappeared, I thought the whole thing had been a complete waste of time, but I was dazzled to see that it had had an effect. I'm not in a position of responsibility like Zead, but even a rookie like me would be a little depressed if the first operation I participated in as a member of Durandal ended up being a complete failure and a waste of time. Even if we didn't achieve our original goal, the fact that it had had some positive effect was quite good news.

However, Hermes suddenly changed his tune and continued speaking, frowning.

"However, there's something that's bothering me a bit. We've been inundated with offers to deliver test Wanzers from companies that previously had no connection with Durandal, but not a single one from a German company.

The exception is Schnetzke, which recently delivered a new Zweder-type heavy van tourer, but they have had a relationship with Durandal for some time, and although their headquarters are in Germany, they are in fact an international company. In reality, it would be better if other German companies tried to outdo Schnetzke by making some moves.

"Isn't that because you're afraid of the German army and government?"

Hermes shook her head at my remark.

"No, the official German Wanzers, including those used by the Blauer Nebel, are overwhelmingly superior to the Schneider Wanzers.



There are a lot of products from Schnetzke. It would be understandable if Schnetzke, which already has a dominant position, were to act cautiously, but there's no point in other companies being timid.

Yes, if there is anything I am embarrassed about, it would be that I am sharing some kind of dark secret that could affect the very existence of the company. Just like Sakata Industries."

"It's a shady, secret.»

I tried to repeat Hermes' words in a low voice. It certainly seemed like the German government was still hiding something.

Briefing Room

Latona came into the central control room and called me.

"Elsa, if you have time, would you mind helping me break in the VanTour? I've decided to switch from Stoke to Tatoo, so I want to get it running and adjust.»"Of course, that's fine."

When I stood up, Hermes clapped his hands.

"That's right. While we're at it, wouldn't it be best to give Elsa's Wanzer a new one and give it some adjustments? If you give me about 30 minutes, I can replace the Tatou arm with a Cicada A, improve the accuracy of the gun's firearms, and get Elsa's hybrid Wanzer up and running. Of course, I'll also re-establish the links."

## Mission 6 Restart

"Thirty minutes. Okay, let's wait."

Before I could reply, Latona answered. Then she continued, »Well, let's take a break until Hermes prepares the van tour. Do you want to have some tea in the break room?"

"Yes, I'll go with you."

When I nodded, Hermes spoke lightly.

"You two can relax and chat in the break room. I'll contact you once I've finished arranging the van tour."

"Thank you. Well then, I look forward to working with you."

Briefing I

Smiling at Hermes, I left the central control room with Latona.

And as soon as she stepped out into the hallway, she had a dazzling, difficult look on her face.

«If relations between E.C. and U.S.N. deteriorate, it will be difficult for Hermes. I hope we can somehow protect her with Durandal.»

says that if push comes to shove, he'll defect to E.C.»

When I responded, Latona tilted her head with her brows knitted.

"My real uncle is a high-ranking U.S. government official, so it's not going to be that easy. No matter how much he tries to act like it's nothing to do with him, the world will always look at him politically.

"I suppose so. But no matter what people say, I want to do everything I can for him, and I will."

I say and she nods with a small laugh.

"Yeah, me too. Hermes is an indispensable member of Durandal, and he's quite a nice guy."

As she said this, Latona's expression suddenly tightened.

"Oh? There's a stranger here. He doesn't seem to be a contractor or someone from a munitions company. Who could he be?"

"picture?"

I turned my eyes in the direction she was looking and couldn't help but gasp.

"That's Frederick Lancaster ! Why are you at Durandal Headquarters?"

"What?"

The moment Latona heard the name Lancaster, her expression instantly turned grim.

Lancaster

Then, the other guy seemed to notice us and turned his face towards us. I thought for a moment that he might just leave, but he came straight towards us.

"Hey, you were with Lt. Colonel Elger in Paris, weren't you? Isn't he at HQ right now?"

## Mission 6 Restart

«What do you want, Leader? If it's an official interview, you need prior permission from the E.C. Council Secretariat.»

I explained as calmly as I could, but Lancaster 1 just grinned and shook his head.»No, no, this isn't the kind of thing we can do leisurely through official channels. I've got some very interesting information about the recent series of attacks on Germany and Poland, and I'd like to hear your opinion on it, Lieutenant Colonel Elger.

Well, if the Lieutenant Colonel is not available, any of the Durandal members involved in this incident would be fine, but is it possible to exchange information?"

"I have no information to tell you, and I have no desire to hear yours,»Latona replied abruptly.

"If this isn't an official investigation, Durandal HQ is no place for an exposé like you to infiltrate. If you don't disappear quickly, we'll have you dragged out.»"Well, don't get so worked up, Lieutenant Vasilev.»With a wry smile, Lancaster waved his hand at Latona.»It's true that I'm the man who goes around exposing Zafra's conspiracies, but you have nothing to do with your homeland's conspiracies, either before or now, have you?"

"picture?"

Front Mission 4 I

by Lancaster's words for a moment, not knowing that Latona was from Zafra, but then Latona herself suddenly turned enraged and shouted, looking like a wild beast.

"What do you mean by this conspiracy? Are you saying that the successive attacks on Germany and Poland were the work of the Zafra army?"

"Yes, that's right."

Lancaster responded calmly.

"At least, that's what I've concluded based on the information I have. That's why I'd like to hear the opinions of the Durandal members who are actually fighting the assault force, but given the nature of the content, we can't just have a chat in the hallway."

"Well,»Lancaster said, shrugging lightly.

"If you're interested in hearing what I have to say, why don't you come to the store called'Ritter's' in front of the headquarters? My friends are checking there to make sure no strange people or devices get in, so for now it's safe. Of course, I'm not forcing you to come."

"∴ ∴ ∴"

Latona glared at Lancaster with an indignant look on her face, but she remained silent, without telling him not to go to such a place or to get out of there. I hesitated for a moment, but then I remembered the words of Gide I had heard in Paris.

## Mission 6 Restart

said that if this case developed politically difficult, he might have no choice but to make a deal with Lancaster and use his information network. If Zead were here now, he probably wouldn't reject Lancaster without listening to what he had to say.»I told Lancaster 1, glittering without putting it into words.

I can't guarantee, though, that I have any information that will be of use to you.»

«OK, deal done."

Lancaster replied with a grin, while Latona, looking genuinely displeased, interjected,»I can't let just one new recruit go. This is annoying, but I'll go too."

Latona Mobile

Without further ado, she took out her own handheld and began to communicate.»This is Hermes Latona. Frederick Lancaster has infiltrated the headquarters. Yes, it's the same Lancaster who exposed the Sakata Industries incident. Apparently he's come to sell information to Zead, but Elsa took the call instead. As things turned out, I was also there, and we went to a store called 'Litta's' to hear what he had to say... Ah, the 'Litta's' in front of the headquarters. Apparently, Lancaster's associates are checking for suspicious people and wiretaps, so it's safe to talk there : ... -No! Zead's out, so you need to stay at headquarters! You're the second manager after all! I'll tell you what he said when I get back,

Front Mission I

"Make sure you adjust the van tour properly ! That's all !»Latona yelled at the end, rudely hanging up her handheld communicator, and glaring at Lancaster.

"Well then, let's go."

"Let me ask you straight out. What is your basis for claiming that the attacking force was not U.SN special forces, nor O.C.U. mercenaries, nor a German staged attack, but rather Zaftra?»As soon as they had settled into their booths at the bar Litters, Latona approached Lancaster in an almost biting tone.

Lancaster responded simply.

"It's a pipeline. As you know, there are many high-speed pipelines running within Zaftra to transport goods efficiently, and some even extend outside the country.

One of these lines, which connects Kursk in Zaftra with Bassau in Germany, was supposedly abolished when E.C. stopped importing resources from Zaftra, but in fact it has been secretly used up to this day.

"Whatever!"

Latona's face suddenly turns pale.

## Mission 6 Restart

"So the raiders entered Germany not by sea, air or road, but by pipeline?"

"Yes. If it were a pipeline that was officially in use, there would naturally be customs checks at the entrance and exit, but since it's officially abolished, it can be used without any checks at all. As long as Germany and Zaftra are in league with each other, they can invade and retreat at will, no matter how cautious the Zhou and Shantou are,»Lancaster said, shrugging his shoulders.

"The truth is, I had been investigating the secret agreement between Zaftra and Germany even before this incident occurred. It seems that the German government has been using a pipeline to send goods to Zaftra for quite some time, without the other E.C. countries finding out. It seems that quite a few German companies are illegally benefiting from this.

it is unlikely that all those in the German government and military know about it and are keeping quiet, but even so, if it were to come to light, it would undoubtedly become a major scandal."

that's why you did something so crazy...»

Latona, pale as a face, groaned softly, then suddenly looked suspicious and asked,»But if that's the case, does that mean that the main conspiracy was Germany, and that Saftra was just following their wishes?"



"That may have been the case at first. But the attack on the new resource area in Poland was clearly a plan led by Zafra. If it goes bust, they'll be able to openly sell the resources to E.C. at a high price without having to smuggle them to Germany. It's a perfect situation for Zafra,»he said bluntly, and Lancaster continued calmly.

"Fortunately, with your help from Durandal, Poland's new resource-rich region was spared annihilation. At least for now, there are no growing voices within E.C. calling for the need to import resources from outside. And since the Polish military is using all its strength to defend the new resource-rich region, a second attack will be difficult. So what is Zafra thinking?

the EC runs out of resources. In other words, the U.S.N. and the E.C. will enter into a full-scale war of attrition.»

New Continent Ao

«So, is it Zafra that's stoking the tension between E.C. and the U.S.N.?»I asked, and Lancaster nodded casually.

New Continent

"Exactly. However, I believe that the manipulation in this regard is mainly being carried out by the U.S.N. The Madeira Free Independence Council, a private Madeira island independence movement group, was probably easy to manipulate, and now most of its executives are Zafra's minions. Other than that, the U.S.N. parliament and the hardliners against the E.C. in the military, I won't say all of them, but quite a few of them are backed by Zafra --- •1' Fortune telling'Re I., ■,'卜', Fortune telling i

## Mission 6 Restart

It seems that there is someone who is

"Is that so? Aren't a lot of ZAFTRA undercover agents in the U.S.N. political and military circles exposed during the Sakata Industries incident?"

Latona said bitterly, and Lancaster shook his head.

"The majority of those are just lizard tails being cut off. The majority of those arrested were personnel who were trained and sent to Zaftra and were treated as expendable.

The real bigwigs have been living in other countries for generations, completely immersed in the nationality of other countries, and leave no trace of their whereabouts. They remain as politicians, bureaucrats, high-ranking military officers, or scholars, advising the rulers and continuing to exert their influence. It is virtually impossible to expose such people unless documents are produced by the Zaftra side.

Lancaster chuckled when he said that.

"By the way, in E.C., they haven't even cut off the tail of the lizard, so it's not surprising that there are Zaftra's undercover agents all over the place. Specifically, it's possible that Blauer Nebel's commander, Brigadier General Glaser, and its commander, Major Wagner, are both Zaftra's undercover agents. Furthermore, the current Chancellor of Germany may be one too."

"The German Chancellor?"

Lancaster nodded slightly as I looked at him with wide eyes.

"Yes, the possibility is not small. However, this is not limited to Zaftra, but not all infiltrators will necessarily remain loyal to their home country forever. Especially if they become socially successful in the country they infiltrate, or if their relatives change and no longer live in their home country."

"Hmm"

As if she had remembered something, Latona snorted in displeasure. Lancaster then continued:

"I've gone off topic a bit, but while ZAFTRA is encouraging the U.S.N. to go to war against the E.C., it seems they are secretly supporting the Venezuelan independence struggle. Have you heard the news that the U.S.N. governor of Venezuela suddenly declared independence?»"Yes, I did, but it wasn't treated as a big deal.»

I was a little hesitant, but I agreed. At the moment, the media in E.C. are naturally focusing on the series of attacks in Germany and Poland, and are not showing much interest in an incident that has taken place in faraway South America.

Lancaster chuckled and shook his head.

"The weakness of the mass media is that they become distracted by major events close to home and fail to see anything else. But a real journalist can read important omens from distant events and small incidents.

The Venezuelan independence conflict is currently a frequent occurrence in South America, not only in the E.C. but even in the local U.S.N.

## Mission 6 Restart

It was treated as just another disturbance. The U.S.N. government also judged that it could be quickly quelled by sending in the regular army's van tour units, and few people, not even the hardliners but the cautious ones, thought that it might become an obstacle to the war against E.C.

«But I received top secret information that what appear to be Zaftra special forces are cooperating with the Venezuelan governor who declared independence. If this information is true, the U.S.N. military may suffer an unexpected bitter defeat in Venezuela."

"But if the U.S.N. military finds itself in a difficult situation in South America, that would be to E.C.'s advantage. If Zaftra is plotting to make the U.S.N. and E.C. go to war, wouldn't that be counterproductive?»Latona pointed this out, and Lancaster smiled suggestively.

"I think Zaftra is taking out an insurance policy. If they rile up the hardliners too much and U.S.N. defeats E.C. one-sidedly, that would be a problem. So they need to be prepared to trip them up when the time comes.

Well, maybe E.C. is a decoy and Zaftra's real intention is to take Venezuela from the U.S.N. and drive a wedge into South America. But either way, Zaftra is trying to use E.C. for its own convenience.

This is the information I have gathered and the inferences I have based on it. What do you think?

"It's infuriating, but it's convincing."

Latona growled, sounding genuinely annoyed.

"However, the fundamental premise of that inference rests on the existence of a clandestine abandoned pipeline between Kursk and Bassau. Without that, Zafra's charges are on par with those of the U.S.N.

「That's right. I completely trust the person who provided me with this information, but I can't reveal who it is, and I can't ask you to trust me without telling you who the information came from. However, I just wanted to see if any of the Durandal members who had actually come into contact with and engaged in combat with the assault force would refute the theory and say it was strange.

If I could extract some persuasive words from Lieutenant Vasilev himself, that would be enough."

Lancaster responded with a grin, while Latona's face grew even more sour.

And I asked Lancaster.

"So, is this the end of the story?"

is none of my business for the time being.»

Saying this, Lancaster waves one hand as if to brush something away.

"Well, if I were you, I would fly to Bassau to find out the truth first.

## Mission 6 Restart

Of course. But everyone knows that you can't be so reckless. Your investigative authority seems to have been revoked, and if you enter Germany without permission in the current situation, you'll be shot down without question. Besides, with Lieutenant Colonel Elger not there, you won't be able to do anything.»

"But would you still fly there?"

Lancaster answered my question immediately.

"Yes, it does. If I can't completely trust the information provided by others, I'll see it with my own eyes first before I start nitpicking. That's the way I've always worked.»"So you sent the Vantour unit across the E.C. realm using a pipeline that was officially decommissioned. I'm sure I never would have imagined it."

After I told him the information I had received from Frederick Lancaster, Hermes put his hand to his brow and groaned in frustration.

"The moment I realized the German government might be involved, I should have realized."

"No, that's impossible."

Briefing Groove

Bosch, who had come to the central control room, responded with a wry smile.

"Now that we have this information, it is only supporting evidence, but a coded message was sent from a comrade at the Dresden base.

After that, they took the time to check the detailed data and succeeded in identifying a trailer that was thought to have been carrying a van tour that had invaded from the Polish border. And, instead of heading for the Furushiro base, the trailer moved south and out of the radar area.»South: Bassau is south of Dresden."

I glared and Bosch nodded.

"Exactly. And the trailer is so bold that it was sent from Germany to the Czech Republic.»They have crossed the border, so we can't pursue them any further."

"Indeed, to get from Dresden to Bassau, it would be shorter to cut through the Czech Republic and head south. That's quite a bold idea."

When Hermes groaned, Latona calmly pointed out.

"No, if we go around Germany, the route will take us west and pass close to the Furushiro base. In that case, there's no point in sending a dummy to the Furushiro base. That's probably Wagner's instruction."

"Oh, I see .... , wait a minute."

Suddenly, Hermes looked as if she had remembered something, and immediately went to the monitor, pulled up the data and began comparing it.

"Yeah, that seems to be the case. I was just talking to Elsa about this, but after the recent incident, all the Wanzer- related military companies with bases within E.C. - area are competing to contact Durandal.

## Mission 6 Restart

However, for some reason, there are a few German companies that I haven't heard anything from. So I checked and found that, as if by agreement, they all have factories and warehouses in Bassau or the surrounding area."

"So you're an accomplice in pipeline smuggling,»Latona stated bluntly, and Hermes nodded deeply.»Probably, but this is also circumstantial evidence.»"In the end, we won't get to the truth unless we go to Bassau,»Latona told me with a difficult look on her face, as I looked dazed.

"But Durandal no longer has any investigative authority. Like that reporter said, if you even try to enter Germany you'll be turned away, or even worse, shot.»"That's true. But Frederick Lancaster said he would go anyway. I'm no reporter, of course, but I would like to get to the truth.»As I glared at them, Latona, Bosch, and Hermes looked at each other with complicated expressions.

If you think about it, Latona is from Zaftra, the new mastermind, Bosch is from Germany, where the incident happened, and Hermes is from the USN•, who seems to have been falsely accused and is being manipulated just like E.C. Each of them must have complicated feelings, so I guess I can't just tell him I want to get to the truth.



"In any case, we can't do anything without Zead,»Bosch muttered, glancing at Hermes.

"Can't you get in touch with him?"

"Yeah, Zead turns off his mobile phone when he's on vacation. It's not like he has a way to make an emergency call...»

Hermes spoke hesitantly, I asked him directly.

How can I make an emergency call?

"...Ask Deputy Secretary Allison."

After Hermes answered, Latona, Bosch, and I looked at each other. »So, what do you mean? What is your relationship? »"Don't ask me that. I'm sure that when Zead was still in the British military, Undersecretary Allison was a special forces officer in the Public Security Bureau or the Foreign Ministry or something, so I think it's probably a remnant of that. Anyway, if you really want to get in touch with Zead while he's on leave, your only option is to ask Undersecretary Allison to put you through.»Hermes replied with a troubled look on her face.

"So, Assistant Secretary Allison asks exactly what purpose Zead is being summoned for, and if she deems it inappropriate, she stubbornly refuses to put him through. To be honest, I don't really like her.

## Mission 6 Restart

"Okay. I'll ask the Deputy Minister,»I said, staring at Hermes.»So, please give me Deputy Minister Allison's contact information.»"So you've received new information and would like to pass it on to Zead. Is it information that requires immediate action?"

I answered Deputy Secretary Allison's question frankly.

"I don't know. It may take a moment, or Zead may decide that there's no problem if we leave it alone. To be honest, I'd like to ask for Zead's judgement on that point as well."

"Right. Well, first of all, please tell me that information. This line has been completely sealed off, so there's no need to worry about it leaking out."

when Undersecretary Allison told me as if it was a matter of course, but then I immediately told him the information I had received from Frederick Lancaster about the pipeline. Even the Undersecretary seemed surprised by this, and after being speechless for a moment, he shouted.

"The supposedly abolished pipeline from Germany to the Safray is being secretly used? So, the E.C. tariff agreement, the trade restrictions outside the territory, and the emergency border closures are all in place.

W-w - wouldn't everything become meaningless?"

"Yes, it is a very serious matter."

I told the Deputy Secretary, trying to sound as calm as possible.

"For that reason alone, the German side will likely try very hard to conceal the truth, and we cannot make accusations lightly based on the testimony of a mere journalist.

I think we have no choice but to get the evidence with our own hands.»"But that's not something you Durandals should do. At the very least, since your investigative authority has been revoked, you shouldn't be so careless as to intervene.

some kind of underpinnings in the E.C. Council so that I can get an investigation order issued against you again, so don't move until then!"

Deputy Secretary Allison's words were shocking, but I responded in a calm tone.

### New Continent

"Right now, the E.C. Congress is busy dealing with the U.S.N. fleet, isn't it? At a time like that, I don't think they would be able to make a resolution that would stir things up like reissuing an investigation order that had once been revoked. And if Frederick Lancaster's speculation is correct, Zahtla is trying to provoke both the E.C. and the U.S.N. into a full-scale state of war. Think about it. If a state of war were to break out, who would be able to expose the smuggling of goods through the pipeline between Germany and Zahtla? On the contrary, the E.C.

## Mission 6 Restart

Won't they have no choice but to join forces against the U.S.N., even if it means condoning the criminal acts of Itz and Zaftra?

"...That's certainly true, that may be the case."

Deputy Secretary Allison responded, sounding tired.

"Furthermore, Frederick Lancaster1 knows that Germany and Zaftra are plotting something. At worst, if we fail to stop the war with the U.S.N., and the whole of E.C. is torn to shreds, and it is revealed that the war was a plot by Zaftra, and that E.C. and the U.S.N. have been duped, then the position of the E.C. leaders and those of us involved will be lower than that of miserable clowns."

"If that happens, then naturally Durandal will not be able to survive."

In truth, I thought that the soldiers who died in wars that were hatched by conspiracies, the families who lost their loved ones, and the ordinary citizens whose homes and property were burned were far more miserable and pitiful than the leaders, politicians, and high -ranking bureaucrats, but I didn't say that and continued speaking.

"That's why I want to abide by Zead's judgement. So that whatever the outcome, neither of us will have any regrets."

When I spoke, Deputy Director Allison paused for a moment before answering.

"I understand. I'll contact Zead and explain the situation. But it's up to him to make a decision."

"Yes, of course. I'm sorry for the inconvenience, but please, I'd appreciate it."

"Hello. It seems Frederick Lancaster has some shocking information to bring you.»It was about two and a half hours after contacting Deputy Director Allison that Zead appeared in the central control room.

"The pipeline connecting Kursk and Bassau was literally a loophole. Now that you mention it, it was such a simple trick that I wonder how no one had noticed it before.»"Well, it seems the German government and Blauer Nebel were also trying desperately to avoid being noticed,»Bosch replied with a wry smile.

"I contacted that comrade and asked him to look into the Bassauro pipeline.

It is quite far from the city of Bassau, and while the pipeline was in operation, there was a customs office and a cargo loading terminal there, but now it is abandoned and unmanned. However, no one has confirmed whether it is really unmanned or not.

And between Bassau and Pioneer, there is a secret German army base. It's not an elaborate one like the old castle base, but it seems to be just an ordinary base, but it's used by Blauer Nebel.

"I thought so"

## Mission 6 Restart

"As expected,»Hermes said, nodding.

Then, in typical Latona style, she asked Zead bluntly,»So, are you going to go to Bassau after all to see if the pipeline is really up and running?

Durandal no longer has any investigative authority."

"I intend to go. However, I can't force you to come with me, and I have no intention of doing so.»It seems that he had already made up his mind by the time he arrived at headquarters, as Zead responded calmly and without hesitation.

"I'll tell everyone else too.

I'm now heading to Bassau to find out the identity and background of the forces that attacked the German military base, the new resource areas in Poland, and also the Kiel naval base.

This is not an officially mandated or commissioned investigation. It is a completely private matter. I am not receiving any assistance from anyone.

And since the German government would probably not allow me to enter the country, I would cross the border by plane without asking permission, which is completely illegal.

Even if they were able to identify the raiding force in Bassau and uncover the truth, they would still not be able to escape responsibility for their illegal acts.

Furthermore, since this is not an organized action by Durandal, if you accompany me, each of you will be responsible for your own actions. Following my orders will not absolve you from responsibility. Since you are not military personnel, you will not be court-martialed, but at worst, you could be considered armed terrorists hostile to the German government. If that were to happen, the maximum penalty would be the death penalty. Of course, there would be no guarantee of survival if you were to engage in combat with the likes of Blauer Nebel.

Once you understand that, I want you to decide whether or not you want to accompany me."

"I'll accompany you."

As soon as Zead finished speaking, I immediately expressed my intention.

"After all, you even bothered Deputy Secretary Allison to give the information to Zead, who was on vacation. There's no way I'm going to say I'm not going after all that.»"I'll accompany you.

make me angry that USN. might be adversely affected by picking an illegal fight with E.C., but the idea that it's actually a buffoonish scheme being manipulated by others is just too ridiculous to sit by and watch.

Whether the mastermind is Zaftra, Germany, or Blauer Nebel, I will use all my strength to stop them.

Hermes spoke in an indignant tone, while Bosch spoke calmly in contrast.

## Mission 6 Restart

"Well, I'm the one in the position where this is most relevant to me. For better or worse, the fate of my country is at stake, so surely I can't just sit back and watch.

Besides, no matter what kind of predicament you get yourself into, if you know it's a predicament and jump into it of your own accord, it's far better than the hellish situation on Huffman Island that you were sent to without knowing anything about.»"Now that I think about it, it's not just someone else's problem. Besides, there's something I need to apologize to everyone for."

Finally, Latona speaks in a brusque tone.

"Actually, I have a little bit of knowledge about Zaftra's special forces.

They believe that they are the top elites of the military, but in my opinion, they are nothing more than pitiful slaves or mere expendables of the military. The proof is that they have been thoroughly trained in extreme ways to commit suicide rather than be humiliated by being captured, and they do not value their own lives. That is why there are so many deaths during training, let alone during operations.

they were really being trained to be top elites, it would be a huge waste to let them die like that, but the military still has no intention of changing its educational policies that disregard the lives of themselves and others, and its dangerous training methods. At least, nothing had changed when I left the Zaftra military two years ago. No, if anything, it may have changed for the worse, for the more harsh,»Latona said, sighing deeply.



"Even though I say this now, I feel it is selfish and cowardly, but when I heard that the German base raiding force not only carried out their annihilation operation mercilessly, but also that when their own Wanzer was damaged enough to render it inoperable, they committed suicide without hesitation, along with the pilot, I immediately thought of the Zaftra special forces. My bad feeling only grew stronger when I heard that the small support Wanzer that Leader and Elsa destroyed in Denmark seemed to be made by Zaftra.

In the Zaftra military, even the elite special forces personnel barely receive any training in handling weapons not made in their own country, especially Wanzers. So even if there's a chance that their true identities might be exposed, they have no choice but to use domestically made units when it comes to the Wanzer itself."

"I see, that's how it is."

Zead nodded with an understanding look.

"In my opinion, it was common knowledge that special forces could use any country's weaponry, and it seems that they assumed that they would avoid using domestically produced weapons whenever possible, especially when conducting infiltration missions where their identities were hidden. Because of that, I had concluded that if they were using Zaftra Wanzers, then they probably weren't the Zaftra military.

But, Latona, you have no obligation to tell me such a story. Zaftra is not the only country that teaches its special forces personnel who infiltrate other countries and carry out sabotage to choose death over being captured, and intuition without objective evidence can lead to misjudgment in some cases.

## Mission 6 Restart

«That may be true. But you should have at least confessed to the leader that you suspected that the raiding force was the Zaftra army when you fought in Poland. Then, without Lancaster pointing it out, while you still had the authority to investigate, you might have focused on the line connecting Germany and Zaftra."

Shaking her head from side to side, Latona spoke in a heavy tone, dazzling.

"In the end, I didn't want to accept the possibility that my home country, Zaftra, was plotting against E.C., sending in special forces to carry out atrocious killings. I didn't have the courage to face the truth, nor was I sincere towards my comrades. It's not something that can be solved with an apology, but I ask for your forgiveness.»"Forgiveness is nothing, I think that's a natural feeling."

Botsushu responded with a calm manner.

be honest, I don't really want to believe that the German government has been betraying E.C. not just this time, but for many years now. Of course, if there is clear evidence, I have no choice but to accept it, and I think it's better to verify the facts for yourself than to wait for others to present the evidence to you.

I would never have been so keen to expose the wrongdoings of the German government and military if it hadn't been for Frederick Lancaster.

I don't think it's something to be ashamed of. After all, isn't it human nature to want to hide the shame of one's family as much as possible?"

"That's right.

On the other hand, if a family member is trying to do something stupid or bad that no one will know about, it's only natural to want to encourage them to stop, as soon as possible, before it becomes public,»Zead asked Latona.

will you accompany me to Bassau?"

"Yeah, sure."

Latona nodded without hesitation.

"It would be good if we could settle this at Bassau, but Zead is thinking about the possibility that we might have to go further.

Therefore, we plan to load as many replacement aircraft and supplies as we can onto large transport aircraft, focusing on new high-performance models that are currently being adjusted."

a van tour, Hermes quickly loaded several containers into a large transport plane, and once the work was finished, she spoke to me, who was helping her.

## Mission 6 Restart

"When you say further ahead, does that mean entering Zaftra?»I asked, and Hermes nodded seriously.

"Yes. It depends on the circumstances, but Zead's guess is that evidence in Bassau may be destroyed. After all, for the German government, if evidence is found that a pipeline that's supposed to be abandoned is still in operation, that alone would be a major problem. If it were to be exposed, it wouldn't be surprising if they prepared a powerful, large -scale operation to destroy the evidence, even if it were to be exposed, to take the extreme example, blow up the entrance to the pipeline itself with a huge amount of explosives. And evidence destruction systems are usually designed to be activated in a very short time with the push of a button, so even if you wanted to stop it, there's no way you could do it. The best you can do is try to avoid getting caught up in it.»"..."Blow up the entrance itself?"

I was a little taken aback and my eyes widened.

"I honestly didn't imagine it would get that far."

"Well, doing something so extravagant would draw a lot of attention, and if the pipeline were to break and become unusable, it would cause trouble for both Germany and Zaftra, so it's really a last resort. Besides, if there were a large amount of explosives planted, they could be checked in advance from the transport plane, so I don't think they would get caught up in it so easily."

With that, Hermes shrugged.

"But Zead speculates that the German side might go that far. And if the evidence is destroyed in Bassau, then the only option left is to go to Zaftra. Infiltrating would be a big deal, but Zead seems to have judged that Zaftra is not as serious about destroying evidence as Germany."

"I see "

Zead's reading of things is really profound.

Then Latona appeared and asked Hermes rather abruptly.

"Have the hover legs been loaded?"

«Hover legs?"

"What on earth are you talking about?»Hermes asked, with a look on her face. Latona replied in a tone that sounded a little annoyed.

"As I thought, it's not loaded. Zead asked me what we needed to operate within Zaftra, and I said it would be best to have the hover legs ready.

Within Zaftora, there are a lot of swamps and marshes and terrains that are difficult to navigate, not only by vehicle, but also by Wanzer legs. In particular, the west and south sides of Kursk, the end point of the pipeline, are full of land that is impossible to move in without hover legs. I know that area all too well, because I worked for the border patrol there.

## Mission 6 Restart

no need for it, that's fine. However, if we end up traveling through the border areas of Zaftra in a Wanzer, we'll be dead without Hover Legs!»"Okay, I get it, hover legs."

Hermes looked a little annoyed at Latona's anger, but nodded.»If I recall correctly, the Pegasus-type hover-leg delivered by Velda should be in the special parts warehouse. Let's go get it."

"We need to prepare at least five units ! If everyone in the group doesn't have the same mobility, we'll end up having to match the slowest unit!»Latona yelled at Hermes as she got into the work Wanzer. Hermes yelled back in a fed up corpse voice.

"I know, I know! Five Hoverlets ... Six, including the spares. We can still carry that many.»

"Ah, but Hermes has to pilot the transport plane, so won't there be four Ventours?"

When I asked, Latona replied with a quizzical look.

"Have you not heard? The piloting of this transport plane will be taken over by Captain Robert's staff. Besides, Hermes alone will not be able to handle such a large plane."

"Ah, right, power."

At first I understood, but at the same time I was a little surprised, so I asked Latona in a lower voice.

"But Captain Robert and the flight crew are personnel who were dispatched, right? I'm amazed that they were able to undertake such a dangerous flight in so many ways."

"They have a lot of pride. It seems they were very upset when their project was thwarted by a lucky hit from an explosive shell cannon in the new resource area in Poland."

Latona responded with a faint smile.

"The captain said to Zead, »If we hadn't made such a blunder, we wouldn't have lost sight of the fleeing enemy, and fallen for Blauer Nebel's trick. Please let us get our revenge."

«::• After all, everyone was disappointed."

That's right, I couldn't let it end with such an unsatisfying conclusion, I nodded.

Then, Bosch came into the hangar.

"Um, where's Hermes? Zead told me it's in the hangar."

"I'm heading to the Special Parts Warehouse to get some hover legs."

I replied and Bosch nodded slowly.

## Mission 6 Restart

"I see. Well, it's not something that's urgent, so let's wait for him to come back."

"what's up?"

When Latona asked, Bosch answered in a matter-of-fact tone. sent me the radar pattern of the Munich Air Base, which has jurisdiction over the Bassau area. If we know this, we'll have a much better chance of concealing any aircraft attempting to enter Bassau.

"...That's a top-secret Air Force secret."

Latona groaned, lowering her voice as expected.

"If it is discovered, you could be court-martialed for leaking secrets and executed by firing squad.»"Yes, that's right. I told him that he didn't need to go to such lengths, but that we could do something about it.

It seems that he feels responsible for the fact that he did an insufficient data comparison, which resulted in Durandal falling into Blauer Nebel's trap."

Saying that, Bosch sighed softly.

"He's a great guy, not only is he excellent, but he's also earnest and honest. That's why I don't want to push him too hard. But even so, if I don't keep him updated on what's going on here, that will just make him extremely worried."



"For that person's sake, we need to resolve this case in a proper way,»I said, and Bosch responded in a sentimental tone.

"That's true. And he's not the only one who's worried. The majority of German soldiers, and the German people, have been living in the depths of anxiety and suspicion ever since this incident began. If there's anything we can do to resolve it, we should do it,»Bosch continued, half to himself.

Jied said that his deployment to Bassau was neither requested nor ordered by anyone and was entirely his personal matter.

there are many people who want the truth of this case to be revealed and resolved properly.

We act on behalf of these people."

"That's right."

I said aloud and Latona nodded silently.

At that moment, a work Wanzer piloted by Hermes brought a container containing the hover legs.

"What's going on? What are you all doing, even Bosch?»Hermes asked as she got off the Wanzer after carrying the container on board.

Bosch

## "Mission 6 Restart

But he responded, his blank expression reverting to normal.

"I was waiting for you to come back. A comrade of mine got me some Luftwaffe radar patterns."

"Wow! Yes, that's great! With that, we'll have less of a risk of being attacked by the German Air Force for trespassing, if not completely eliminated!»Hermes gave a cheer quite obediently, and the two of them got into the transport plane. Probably,

Jammer

They're probably adjusting the radar jamming device.

So I asked Latona about something that had been bothering me.

"By the way, haven't you told Beck anything?"

"I'm not saying anything. If Zead judges it necessary to speak, he will.»As expected, Latona responded very curtly, but then she looked at me and softened her tone a little before continuing.

"Just as Zead said, this trip to Bassau is a dangerous, reckless and illegal undertaking. That Italian likes to do reckless things, so if I explain the situation to him, he will probably say he will accompany me without a second thought.

But to be honest, he's completely useless as a combat personnel. If they were to take a novice who is nothing more than a Wanzer pilot to a dangerous place and have him die, it would be a bad awakening for them.

It'll be safer in many ways if we leave her at HQ.»

"That's right."

But Beck himself probably wouldn't think so, I thought to myself. It was about eight hours after Zead returned to headquarters and made the decision to head to Bassau that all preparations were complete.

"Now, we will carry out the first illegal deployment since Durandal was founded. This will make us criminals with no room for excuses.

Are you all prepared?」

Jid asked in a somewhat joking tone, and we all nodded with straight faces.

Then we boarded the transport plane and took off to Bassau.

(Continue)

# Toru Akitsu

Born in Tokyo on February 16, 1960. Graduated from the School of Literature at Waseda University. Debuted in 1988 with »Majuu Senshi Luna Varga.« Utilizing his highly original writing style, he has written many popular series. His main works include »Majuu Senki Neo Varga« (Kadokawa Sneaker Bunko), »Harubya Funsenki« (Haruki Bunko), »Houkago Uchuusen« and »Kanki Fuunroku« (Famitsu Bunko).  
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## GAME NOVELS Front Mission 4

### ~Elsa #i~

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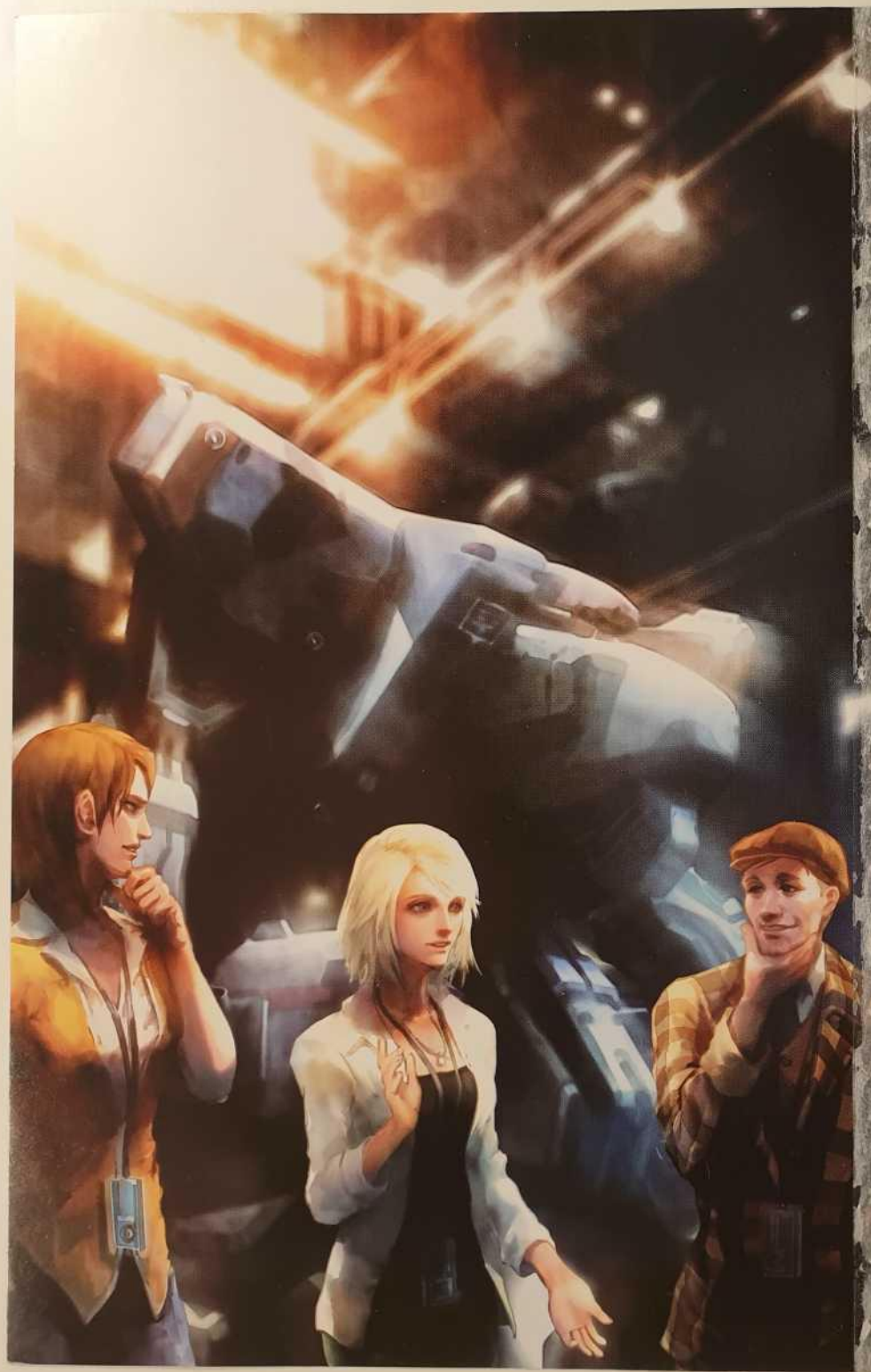
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FRONT MISSION 4

